

NEWS FROM SCRIPTURE UNION IRELAND

2016

Inspire

"YOUR WORD IS A LAMP TO MY FEET"
PSALM 119:105

3 NEW
INTERNS

SCRIPTURE UNION:
*"A significant part
of my whole life"*

Cheryl celebrates 25 years with SU

SCRIPTURE UNION'S **NEW**
MEDIA FILM RESOURCE
TO ENGAGE WITH TODAY'S YOUTH

**"ALPHA YOUTH HAS REALLY
OPENED MY EYES AND NOW
I KNOW GOD CAN FORGIVE ME"**

Student from Midlands



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WELCOME

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” Hebrews 11:6 NIV

LEAP OF FAITH

We in Scripture Union are blessed by God with some wonderful activity resources at our Christian Retreat and Adventure Centre at Ovoca Manor. Thousands of children, young people and families each year receive great enjoyment from the challenges through equipment like the High Ropes, Jacob’s Ladder and the ‘Leap of Faith’.

At a recent mid-week retreat I read with much interest the varied feedback from the young people and top of the list of one of their most enjoyable experiences was facing the challenge of the ‘Leap of Faith. In a way this is symbolic of the essence of the ministry of Scripture Union with these young people. We are a faith based Christian movement constantly seeking to encourage them to find purpose and meaning in life through faith in Jesus Christ

The passage in Hebrews 11 tells us that God is pleased and takes delight when we actively put our faith in Him and trust Him with our lives, our hopes and our future.

“We are now intentionally using these fun experiences and activities to impart some key spiritual principles and truths to these young people.”

Faith is a wonderful gift from God that we can all receive.

When you scale the pole and stand on the platform some 10 metres high, you are faced with a decision to reach out in faith and trust, you jump out and grab the trapeze bar. You are totally secure and harnessed and in fact just a few feet away from your goal, but that leap seems a chasm! But Jesus tells us if we have even a little faith, even the size of a mustard seed and exercise that faith in God He will move mountains and do the impossible. What a wonderful encouragement and consolation.

“the challenge to us is to create...a sacred space for them to meet with God and place their faith and trust in Him.”

We are now intentionally using these fun experiences and activities to impart some key spiritual principles and truths to these young people. That our Christian faith is so important and gives us the ability to look beyond the momentary and temporal as we fix our focus on Jesus and what is true and eternal. Through faith we are privileged to see and live our lives from God’s perspective

and are freed from all our fears and anxieties. We in Scripture Union are so privileged to engage with and share this message with thousands of young people from all backgrounds each year through retreats, camps and missions, in schools, parishes and communities. Despite all the criticism of modern youth culture so many of them have a lovely spirit of generosity and high ideals, hopes and aspirations. More and more the challenge to us is to create space, a sacred space for them to meet with God and place their faith and trust in Him.

This Inspire magazine, full of encouraging articles, will I hope greatly lift your spirit and encourage you as read these stories of Faith!

My heartfelt appreciation and thanks to each of you as you partner with Scripture Union through prayer, financial giving and volunteering to bring this wonderful message of hope and faith to many more young people throughout Ireland in 2016.

Jim Donnan

General Director

SCRIPTURE UNION
is áfachranán dá mha chosa dá bhriathair, is solips dá mha chosán E. Ps 119 v 105
 Ireland

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hello



My name is Emma Fawcett and in May 2015 I took up the role of Camps & Volunteer Management – Ministry Leader with Scripture Union. I'm originally from Enniskillen in Co Fermanagh and I've previously spent 7 ½ years as a Youth Pastor in Dundrum Methodist Church, Dublin.

Here at SU we run a variety of different events and in 2015 we were blessed and honoured to have over 1750 people attend our 23 camps including 4 parenting camps, 7 residential camps, 4 missions in Wicklow, Monaghan, Cavan and Donegal and 13 primary schools attended our Weekend Adventure camps at Ovoca Manor. It's so exciting to be involved in such great work and to see God work through our amazing volunteers, without whom, none of the above could happen!

It is not possible to talk about all our camps and missions in such a small space so I encourage you to look at our website to find out more details.

Our teens camps during Easter and Summer were a huge success as always and every

time I visited a camp I could hear laughter and joy as great fun was being had and the Word of the Lord was being shared.

Not one of our camps and missions events could run without the expertise, time and willingness of our volunteers. They are truly a fantastic bunch and I'm not sure they realise how great they actually are and how honoured we are to have them as part of the SU family. On 4th December we hosted our Volunteer Big Celebration as a small thank you to all of those who were part of planning, praying for and running our camps. We had a great evening of celebrating together and sharing stories about how even the smallest act can have the biggest impact.

If you would like to know more information about our camps please keep an eye out for our camps brochure.

We have some exciting new weekends coming up including Overflow (a young leaders training weekend), walk the Camino and a camp for over 18's looking at the art of faithfully reading, reflecting and acting on Scripture so keep an eye out on our website for updates.

Thank you to all who made the camps work of 2015 so successful and I pray that God's hand of blessing is on 2016.

Emma Fawcett

Camps & Volunteer Management

For information on Scripture Union's Camps Programme and to book visit www.scriptureunion.ie



GREYSTONES CSSM

One of our larger missions is Greystones CSSM which has been running for 119 years and is wonderfully led by Alison Gill. For two weeks a team of 50 volunteers run a daily service on the beach and age specific activities for those aged 4-18 years old. This year we were blessed to see 719 children and teens register with us during the two weeks. The theme this year was 'Guess Who' and during the mission we heard stories of Jesus and how those stories can still impact us today. Through talks, stories, games, crafts, walks, chats, prayers and studying the Bible we saw children and adults grasp a new sense of who God is and His love, mercy and grace. One of our leaders upon reflection on the fortnight shared with us "I remember a really touching moment on the last day when several kids in my group asked God to be their friend". Our prayer for these children is that their relationship with God keeps growing throughout the year and the decision they made to be friends with God has a lasting impact.



719
children
and teens
REGISTERED

CAMPS & CLUBS



FAMILY CAMPS

We are keen to provide opportunities for families to experience faith together so we offer 4 parenting weekends that provide space for a parent and a child to have a weekend away together. There is a blessing on these camps as a mother or father gets to spend concentrated time with their child in an environment that is safe and fun. We also have an annual Family Week which saw 172 people live in community in Ovoca Manor and share in games, worship, fun, meals, competitions and lots of rain this year whilst studying the book of Daniel. These camps fill up quickly every year so do make sure to book in early if you would like to attend.

BREAKING NEWS... BREAKING NEWS... BREAKING NEWS...

I very much regret to share the news that Nathan Norris has decided to accept the offer of a post of Bursar in a public school in the UK and will be resigning his role as Centre Manager at Ovoca Manor with Scripture Union before Easter 2016.

This decision will allow Nathan, Fiona, Kate and Harry make a return to the UK. We will greatly miss Nathan and Fiona and the family as they have made a significant contribution to the ministry at Ovoca Manor and the wider SU work.

They took over from Herbert and Jean Harper over seven years ago and it was no easy task to step into this role. Nathan was soon launched into managing and overseeing a major building project with the development of the wonderful new Extension to Ovoca Manor costing almost 2 million euro. Nathan undertook this with such diligence and attention to detail and he will be much credited with his efforts in making this a reality.

Nathan has also worked hard at ensuring a very strong foundation with a new staffing and

operational structure that has seen the ministry grow with a vibrant mid-week programme of secondary school retreats and some exciting outdoor activities like the High Ropes Course. The Manor also continues to generate a healthy turnover which is a great achievement.

We are now faced with the daunting challenge of finding a suitable replacement for Nathan to provide leadership and vision to see the ministry grow and flourish over the next seven years!

Please see the advertisement for the role of team leader...please circulate among your contacts, churches and parishes, web sites and social media.

Please do pray for Nathan, Fiona, Kate and Harry as they work through the transition time over the next few months. Pray for the staff team at Ovoca Manor as they adapt to this new reality and also for me and others as we seek the Lord earnestly to help us find a person of his choosing and calling to fill the new role.

Jim Donnan
General Director



SU VOLUNTEERS BIG

CELEBRATION EVENING

We LOVE our volunteers here at Scripture Union. We couldn't do God's work without the help of amazing, talented, gracious and generous volunteers.

Over 1750 young people were able to attend an SU camp and over 2000 students in secondary schools experienced our Authentic Youth retreat team in their school in 2015 alone and none of this would be possible without our fantastic volunteers (did I mention that we love our volunteers?)

On a blustery and wet Friday in December we hosted a Big Celebration as a small token of our thanks for all those who faithfully pray, help in Ovoca Manor, sit on SU council, lead at camps, do our internship, financially donate and generally keep SU running. We had a great evening eating food and catching up with old friends as well as making some new

ones. Michael Broderick played an acoustic set for us as we drank mulled punch and Emma Gill pulled out all the stops by creating a fantastic photo-booth. We heard from Anna what it is like being an SU intern and as I (Emma) spoke it became clear why we are blessed to have so many willing volunteers. It is part of our DNA to serve. We serve a God who first served us and it is out of a place of grace that we can't help but serve Him, by volunteering and serving others. The SU volunteer family is always changing with new people joining us and others having to step down, but one thing is always the same and that is the faithfulness of the God we all choose to serve.

For those of you who weren't able to join us, let us extend a HUGE thank you for all the work you do and for the thousands of prayers that are said. We couldn't survive without you and we pray God's blessing upon you.

Emma Fawcett

Camps & Volunteer Management

OVOCA MANOR

2015 has been a year of change, arrivals and departures and continued opportunities.

The year started with 'Nua' a fantastic SU camp quickly followed by a large gathering of American missionaries who had travelled from all over the world to meet for refreshment and encouragement. As we approach the end of the year we are in the midst of getting ready to run the Follow the Star programme, an interactive retelling of the Christmas message for junior and senior infants. Our work spans such a diverse group of people but with one aim of providing a safe, fun and relevant programme for exploring the Christian faith.

We have had close to 5000 people stay with us during the year from schools, parishes, youth groups and SU camps and a further 1200 for day events. There are many highlights throughout the year from conversations had with individual young people to watching groups tackle our new raft building activity or the new orienteering course. One event that often remains imprinted in our memories is the commissioning service for Ember leaders. This event run in partnership with the Dublin Archdiocese aims to train groups of senior school students to be leaders within schools where they will be an example of faith in action. Being part of a service where young people commit to support, serve and be faith ambassadors within their school is exciting and transforming to all.

There have been a number of changes within the staff team during the year and we want to thank all for their commitment, dedication



and desire for sharing God's love during their time. Early on in the year Ger and Deirdre Carolan moved to Canada and we welcomed Christophe Borel to the team to fill this vacancy. In November we waved goodbye to Steve and Lucy who moved to Dartmoor in England to work at Heatree Activity Centre and we were delighted that Jasper Chisnall was able to fill this vacancy. We also celebrated the graduation of our 4 interns in June and welcomed another 3 in September. You can read more about Christophe, Jasper and our interns on the following pages.

We head into 2016 with much optimism and expectation. In particular we are praying for direction and wisdom on how to further improve our programmes, helping young people explore aspects of the Christian message through our schools retreats in a relevant and natural way.

Nathan Norris

**Want to keep in touch with everything that's going on at Ovoca Manor?
Visit our Facebook page or visit www.ovocamanor.ie**



“ Living and working in Ovoca Manor with my family close to me, serving the Lord in such a lovely place, why would I ask for more? ”



CHRISTOPHE BOREL

This April, it has been 19 years since I landed in Rosslare Harbour with my wife Nathalie.

It was a one way trip as we decided to move from Switzerland, helping to start and lead a faith community in Arklow, Co Wicklow.

Since this time we were blessed by the arrival of 3 children, Amaris 18, Yona 16 and Elias 10 and we moved from one place to another around the Rathdrum area as we needed bigger houses to accommodate the growing family. Our 7th move was from Ballinaclash to Ovoca Manor last December when we were invited by Scripture Union to live in one of the staff houses on site.

Working in the Manor is not new to me as I had the experience to be employed there in 1999 and 2000, when the Centre was under the management of Herbert and Jean Harper.

The offer to go back last spring as Facility Manager was a blessing but also a massive challenge as the Manor is now such a bigger and more modern building.

My background in engineering gave me a love for manual work but I wouldn't be able

to do my job without joining my skills with the expertise of the other members of the team.

I am very excited to serve the diverse groups we have during the year as they are the reason why we work so hard to keep and improve this facility. Their diversity in traditions and backgrounds are enriching to me.

My past pastoral experience means that I absolutely relish working with people. My heart is always delighted to see young and old enjoying this place and spending a special time here. It is great to see them having fellowship with their friends, sharing and experiencing the love of God in this beautiful property.

Living and working in Ovoca Manor with my family close to me, serving the Lord in such a lovely place, why would I ask for more? The only part missing is YOU... And I will be really pleased to welcome you for a week or a shorter time, doing my best so your stay in Ovoca Manor will be a wonderful and blessed experience.

Christophe Borel
Facility Manager, Ovoca Manor



“My aim is to get people engaging with their beliefs, asking questions, conversing and reasoning with the idea of God.”

JASPER CHISNELL

Hello, my name is Jasper and I am the new Activities Manager in Ovoca Manor.

I would like to take the time to tell you a little bit about myself. I have been married to my lovely wife Hansi for just over three years now and we live in Wicklow Town. In November I came on board with Ovoca Manor full time and I am thrilled to be here. Previously I have been working as a professional senior instructor and freelance instructor (which included Ovoca Manor). I have been blessed with many years working in the field I love, and I will bring this passion and experience with me.

I have an enthusiasm for ‘theology’ and it often manifests itself in conversation. Faith is something we all have, whether you believe in God or not... it is still faith, as it’s a position or belief on God. My aim is to get people engaging with their beliefs, asking questions, conversing and reasoning with the idea of God.

Freelancing with Ovoca Manor for the last three years has given me a great insight and drive for the fantastic work that goes on here. Best of all I get to share my passion for God through adventure and fun. I plan to develop this further using the medium of adventure for the Lord’s glory. I cannot wait to see what He has planned for this amazing place, and I am grateful to be a part of it.

I like many outdoor activities but my three favourite ones are mountaineering, sailing and bushcraft... I try to enjoy them as often as possible at work and in my personal time. For me, it is not just a job, but it is a lifestyle (just ask my wife as she graciously puts up with my adventures and equipment stored in the house).

I am looking forward to the 2016 season and I hope to meet you somewhere between the top of the climbing wall and the side of the fishing pond.

Thanks for reading this,

Jasper
Activities Manager at Ovoca Manor

MAIREAD WYNNE

My first experience at Ovoca Manor, was to volunteer at a Christmas Fair where Jean & Herbert were at the helm. I was totally blown away by their enthusiasm and relentless energy and their heart for young people. I was delighted when they asked if I would come back the following year. Each time I was there, I felt such a strong connection to God and knew I would be back.

I then started volunteering at SU Adventure Camps, where I predominantly looked after the administration. It was hard work, great fun, with very little sleep, but it was to be my introduction to witness the amazing impact God can have on not just children, leaders but also on me! I have been running my own Adventure Camp for a number of years, which again is hard work, great fun and yes you have guessed, with very little sleep. But it is so rewarding to see how the kids grow in their faith and mature in their relationship with God. What is more incredible is when they articulate, they think we are cool and that they would like to be a leader themselves someday. How amazing is that!!

When the position of Administrator came up in Ovoca Manor, I just knew in my heart, that God was calling me there. I couldn't explain it, it just was to be.

So, I joined the team at Ovoca Manor, for what was meant to be a six month maternity cover. Six months grew to a year and a year grew to four and half. I still continue to feel so blessed and privileged to be working here. My role has developed and evolved over the years, in addition to my role as office administrator, I am also the Child Protection Officer and I look after all the Garda vetting of our volunteers. It is diverse and no two days are the same.

“I feel we are not just a team in Scripture Union, we are a family who have been blessed with different strengths and gifts.”

I am so excited to see what God has planned for the ministry of Scripture Union into the future and can't wait to be part of that adventure. I feel we are not just a team in Scripture Union, we are a family who have been blessed with different strengths and gifts. We support each other in our working day, through prayer and through friendship. How blessed are we!!!

Mairead

Office Administrator at Ovoca Manor



AUTHENTIC YOUTH

Yet again, Authentic Youth retreat team has been blessed with a great year of in-school retreats around Ireland as well as an increased number of activity retreats at Ovoca Manor.

Thank you for your continued prayer and financial support. We cannot do this work without your help and assistance and it is a real encouragement to us knowing we are covered in prayer.



We have been in approximately 20 secondary schools around the country and spoken to just over 2,000 students since January 2015. Our group sizes can vary anywhere from 13–120 and both ends of the scale bring so much fun and laughter in our retreats. The bigger numbers bring instant atmosphere and the smaller ones are better to get to know the students more personally. Our days are received



very positively and we get called back to the same schools each year, which encourages us that we must be doing something constructive and helpful for that teacher, chaplain and school.

We finished our gap year last year in June with Elodie, Zola, Owen and Sazi. It finished strong and they were encouraged by their year with us. They have since moved on to their 'normal' lives. Sazi and Zola went back to South Africa and have gone to college. Sazi deciding last minute to join seminary! Owen moved to Spain and Elodie went back to Switzerland. Please do keep them in your prayers that God will continue to help them grow deeper in relationship with Him.



This academic year we have Anna, James and Josh who have jumped into the year enthusiastically. They are all 19 years old and are all from the island of Ireland. James is from Belfast while Anna and Josh are both from Dublin. They, like last year, are living down at the Manor and do all retreats both at the Manor as well as in school. The interns do invaluable work and these three have gotten stuck into all aspects of SU life.

Please pray that they embrace this year and listen to God's voice and His guidance for their lives.

We had spent a day in a school in Dublin. We had played games, given testimonies, discussed moral and faith issues, the day had finished and we were packing up. One male student came forward at the end and says to me 'Jude, have you heard the phrase, 'Every touch leaves a trace?' You might not know the impact your day will have on this group or this year, but thank you for taking the time to come and speak to us. You will leave a trace here.'

“You will leave a trace here.”

How can you not give thanks to God for that kind of a response to one of our days? It is incredibly difficult to do this role, but there are students out there who do feel encouraged and who are strengthened in their faith because of what we do and we will forever be thankful to God for that privilege.

Jude Barry

Authentic Youth Manager

In our 10th year of an internship year, we are already looking to our next year's internship so if you are interested, or know of someone who may be, please contact Jude for more information.

Our mission, apart from sharing the Gospel, is to encourage and support young people around Ireland. One of the hardest parts of this job is that you cannot measure or quantify the impact. We do get feedback from the days on how our retreats are run but we very seldom hear how our talks and work has impacted the life and faith of a teenager. However, every now and again we get a glimpse of that.

For more information on Authentic Youth school retreats visit
www.scriptureunion.ie or email
jude.barry@scriptureunion.ie



ANNA

I'm Anna, I'm 19 years old and I'm from Blackrock in Dublin. I went to Newpark Comprehensive and recently sat my Leaving Cert in June 2015 so I decided to take a year out to serve God before I head off to college. I decided to become an SU Intern because I felt a real calling to help teenagers understand and explore both themselves and God!

I find it challenging speaking at retreats and with students, especially ones very close to my age and from different backgrounds, but I know God is using me this year with my story and I'm excited to serve Him.

This year I am most excited to see God work not only in the big things, but also in the small things that we can usually overlook.

JAMES

Hey I'm James, I'm 19 years old and I'm from Belfast.

I had known for quite a while that I wanted to take a gap year after school but it was only this summer that I finally decided what I would do. In fact I only had about two weeks between deciding to do the internship and beginning it so it was a speedy turn around. I spoke to both Jude and Emma at the Family Week in the Manor over summer and they convinced me. It's been challenging but great fun so far and I've learnt a lot about myself.

I love working with young people and I always enjoyed the camps I went to at the Manor as a child so it's great to be able to provide the same fun for a new bunch of young people. I can't wait to continue the work of SU for the remainder of my time with them.



JOSH

Hello, I'm Josh and I'm an intern at Ovoca Manor. I'm a 19 year old youngster from Ringsend.

I chose to do this year for a couple of reasons. First of all I love the grounds and the people here. Secondly, I wanted to work with secondary school groups that come to our retreats. And last of all, I wanted to take a Gap Year to strengthen my relationship with God and decide what life path I'm going to take.

I'm looking forward to becoming a leader for camps and retreats. I hope to stay the whole year and grow as a person to do what God has planned for me. I'd also like to become the 'King of Banter'!! Thanks for reading.

WANT YOUR LIFE TO MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE?

Looking for a real challenge?
Serving God and sharing your faith?

Why not consider
taking a year out
with SU and living
in community at
Ovoca Manor.

JOIN OUR SU INTERNSHIP

Contact: Jude Barry
at 01 280 2300
for more information
and a chat!



ALPHA YOUTH MIDLANDS

This term has been very busy with Alpha – Youth in the Midlands. Alpha has run in six schools, Sacred Heart School, Tullamore College, Colaiste Choilm and Killina who are all in the Tullamore area.

Combined we had approximately 140 students experiencing Alpha this term in Tullamore. This left us with a great opportunity to join all schools together for their Holy Spirit Day!! This was to date the largest Holy Spirit Day for the midlands. Due to a mix up with one school sending us all their TY's we had 150 students. This was a very busy but exciting day with a mix of fifth year and transition year students. Our second largest Holy Spirit Day took place in Athboy, Co. Meath. We had another great day with over 120 fifth year students attending. I have to mention our final Holy Spirit Day, which was the smallest so far with 18 transition year students from Gallen Community School, Ferbane attending their Holy Spirit Day. It might have been small but still well worth it. It is great to see a total of nearly 300 students experience Alpha – Youth this autumn!!

Working with the students can be at times challenging but as the weeks go by you find more and more students enjoying the whole experience. At the end of Alpha in Athboy one student said 'Before Alpha I really thought God could never forgive me for the things I have done wrong. Alpha has really opened my eyes and now I know God can forgive me!'

Another student wrote the following after completing Alpha this autumn.

'I did the Alpha programme as part of my Transition Year curriculum. I found it extremely interesting; I also found that it related very well to young people. It didn't force Christian beliefs on to us; rather it explained how God

“It didn't force Christian beliefs on to us; rather it explained how God works and how great He is!”

works and how great He is! I learnt so many new things that I never knew about God. After watching each video clip we would answer the question asked in our small groups.



This was a great opportunity to talk about our belief in God and how we felt about everything. There was nobody forcing us to take part in these discussions. There was a very open and calm air in all the groups, which left me feeling very comfortable and relaxed. This opportunity helped me get closer to God and also my peers.’

Prayer Spaces as always has been a very big part of my Holy Spirit Days, but this autumn I was asked to set up Prayer Spaces in Tullamore’s Church of Ireland and Presbyterian churches. St. Catherine’s Church held a 200 Years of Worship Flower Festival, which was covered by RTE. It was so exciting for me to be given the chance to incorporate prayer spaces with breath taking flower arrangements. Seeing how well these prayer spaces worked, Rev William Hayes from the Presbyterian Church really wanted to incorporate prayer spaces in an event his church was running. This was a day of prayer and information for the refugee crisis. I was asked to speak again this year at the Chaplains Association of Ireland in Killkenny. As a result of this I was asked by two chaplains to come to their school next term to set up Prayer Spaces for a week so that the whole school can experience these prayer activities.

Annette Evans

ALPHA YOUTH IN SCHOOLS & PARISHES

It’s been five years now since we started using Alpha – Youth in schools and parishes across the country. It has been a joy to see Alpha – Youth grow. You’ll find Alpha running in over 15 counties. More than 40 schools have used Alpha – Youth. Up to 60 different youth and parish groups have benefitted from it and one of the things I love about Alpha in general are the volunteers that it mobilises. There have been hundreds of volunteers since 2011 giving of their time and sharing their faith Journeys. In addition to this we have added more to the Alpha team. Annette Evans, for the last two years, has been developing Alpha – Youth and prayer spaces within the midlands and we are now turning our attention towards Cork with the hope of employing someone there in 2016. The harvest is plentiful...

In recent years there has been significant growth in the amount of overnight Alpha retreats down in Ovoca Manor. Alpha has always prioritised the retreat element to the programme and the benefits of taking students away from normal life are fruitful. Schools like Gonzaga, Belvedere, St Marys, Colaiste De Hide, St Brendans and more have really invested in what Alpha can bring to the faith development of their students. In some cases these school are not only running multiple Alpha – Youths but also having multiple overnight retreats every year. It’s a good time to do outreach in Ireland.

CHECK OUT THESE STORIES TO HEAR FROM THE STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE...

I had the complete wrong idea about Alpha - Youth before I left the school to go to the parish centre, on the first day of the programme.

I wouldn't consider myself very religious or to have a strong faith, so to be completely honest, I wasn't really looking forward to it. I shouldn't have thought that way though because I was so wrong.

Every session on a Thursday afternoon started with tea and biscuits, which was really nice and made it less formal, along with a team game. These were really fun and made our little group bond more and get to know our leader, who volunteered to come every week, and for whom we are extremely thankful for.

The Alpha - Youth course is centred on short clips of footage usually containing four questions per clip with two young men featuring in the clips. They were modern stories, which made it easy to relate to. The questions asked us all about what we believe or what we have learned from bible stories. No answer was ever "wrong" or "right" and everyone in the group listens to each other and respects your opinion. Some questions required more deep thought but others were just casual questions about our life experiences. Listening to other people's answers created conversations between the whole group about whatever topic was being discussed for the week. Our leaders often told stories about their lives as they are more mature than us and have been through so much.

I think Alpha - Youth has helped me scratch beneath the surface about God and not to be so closed minded. I would be more encouraged to pray now to "that person up in the sky" after Alpha - Youth because of all the stories and evidence of praying and how it works from the clips and our leaders. Alpha - Youth has been one of my favourite things in transition year because it was every week so we could look forward to it and it has definitely been worthwhile.

Áine Mullarkey, *Leixlip*

"I think Alpha - Youth has helped me scratch beneath the surface about God"

Alpha - Youth was a great experience. It helped me to grow closer to God. At the start I wasn't sure if I was going to like it as it didn't sound that interesting.

When I went to it for the first time, I didn't know what to expect but it was really good. At the start we all got tea and biscuits and had a chat and then we split into groups for games and discussions. I really liked my group as we got on very well, and our group leader, Francis, was very nice and she was really funny.

Every week I'd look forward to it as it gave me a chance to think more about God and it helped me to understand the meaning and life of Jesus. Overall I really enjoyed Alpha and thought it was a great experience for me. After all the weeks of Youth Alpha I think I have really thought hard about God and I am really starting to believe in him.

Adam Murphy, *Dublin*

INSPIRE SCHOOL EVENTS

2015 was the official launch of 'Inspire School Events'.

For many years Scripture Union have been bringing speakers into Ireland facilitating full weeks of school tours reaching thousands of students with inspiring testimonies and words of hope. Inspire School Events is an initiative which is being organised through the strong partnership of Scripture Union and Alpha Ireland. This year we had our first school tour on the theme of Easter. Scott Evans was the guest speaker communicating on the topic 'Captivated by the story of God on a cross and a grave that couldn't hold Him'. It was a powerful 5 days in 11 schools engaging with some 1500 students. Treise Lenihan from Cork said 'Scott has the likeability factor and has a great gift for speaking to students on their level. He breathed life into the Easter story for the students by presenting it in a refreshing and thought provoking way'.

In November we welcomed back Jason Maupin from the USA. Jason has spoken in Ireland for many years sharing his story with over 10,000 Irish students. He has a remarkable story to share. Raised in a home where his father was abusive, by the age of nine, Jason had become suicidal. With his

mother diagnosed with Lupus and his brother on a downward spiral of drug and alcohol abuse, Jason bought into the lie that his own life was worth nothing. Out of desperation, he took his mother's handgun to try and kill himself. With the choice of life and death in his hands, Jason realised he had to look beyond his circumstances and realise his life was for a purpose greater than he would ever know. Anne Loughman from St Colmcille's said 'that his vulnerability with the students is breath-taking. The students were completely fixed on his every word as he spoke about overcoming adversity. His wife Jessica was the perfect addition with her powerfully performed songs. I'd have them back in a heartbeat'. This November he spoke to 19 schools, over 2000 students in 9 counties an even had the wonderful opportunity to speak to prisoners in Mountjoy.



PRIMARY SCHOOLS & PARISHES

“We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we’re curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.”

Walt Disney

I began working with Scripture Union in the summer of 2010. I had just qualified with a degree in Social Care and while I had experience in the voluntary sector and in a church context I really had no concept of life in full time employment. Scripture Union took a risk and hired me fresh out of college, opening a new door for them and me, one which we were all curious about. The role ‘Primary School Coordinator’ was newly developed and the canvas was blank. I was motivated and challenged to take this blank canvas and prayerfully see what it could become. Now in 2016 the canvas is no longer blank. It is filled with colour and depth accumulating in relationships with

parishes and churches, schools and teams of people who partner and collaborate with Scripture Union in many capacities. It is a canvas that has been painted, not only by me, but by many people that have brought joy, excitement and challenge to my role and my life personally. And now, after 5 years, it is time to pass on the canvas to someone new and for them to create new things while holding firm to the many wonderful entities that have been created over the last few years.

“One of the most beautiful gifts in the world is the gift of encouragement. When someone encourages you, that person helps you over a threshold you might otherwise never have crossed on your own.” **John O’Donohue**

I am indebted to many people without whom this journey and ministry could not have happened, their support, prayers and encouragement have been the greatest gifts: Staff and Council of SU, Pastoral Workers in parishes, volunteers, my advisory board for the first three years of my role and many many others.

PLEASE SEE SEPERATE ADVERT FOR THIS JOB

FOLLOW THE STAR

Follow the Star has run in Ovoca bi-annually for a few years, with over 400 junior and senior infants coming through the doors to hear the wonder filled story of Jesus being born through actors locally and the SU staff playing many roles as angels, shepherds and Herods.

The feedback from the local schools has been filled with praise as the children run around dressing up, making crafts and decorating biscuits. Offering this event for free is a gift that is offered to these schools and one that has been a real joy for me personally. If ever you need a nativity actor you can call Ovoca Manor, the staff know their lines off by heart now.



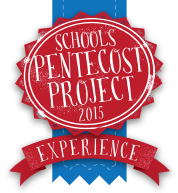
FAITHFEST

Faithfest is an ecumenical event run by the Catholic Dublin Diocese, we have enjoyed supporting this team in running this valuable event for a few years now reaching over 100 young people on a consistent basis.

Through this event I have found myself sitting on the committee for a sub event 'Faithfest@Tallaght'. This event reaches young people in secondary school all over Tallaght who join together to have fun and celebrate faith. We have seen such brilliant partnership come from this and an annual retreat in Ovoca Manor for those young people who attend Faithfest to go deeper in



exploring who God is in their lives. We look forward to seeing this event continuing to grow.

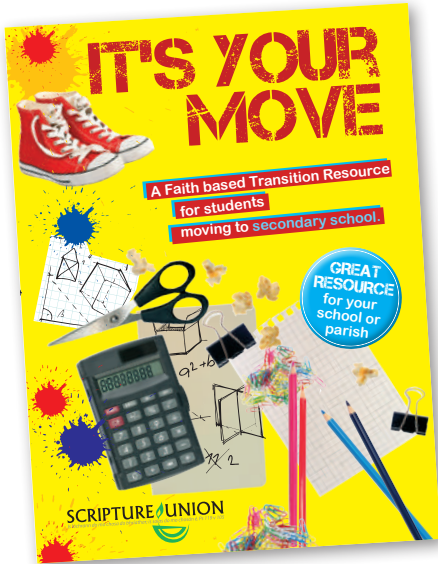


PENTECOST PROJECT 2015

“Experiential workshops for children taking them on the journey of Pentecost”

The Pentecost Project has run for the last two years as the children’s part of ‘Ecumenical Bible Week’. The Pentecost Schools experience has been a series of experiential workshops for children taking them on the journey of Pentecost and allowing them to creatively express their understanding and own ideas around what happened during this time. Its first year saw 257 children participate and learn about Pentecost and produce incredible class comic books. Last year the Pentecost Schools Experience took place in the inner city in Dublin with 137 children from 4th class participating. In addition to this we added an online project for schools. ‘The Pentecost Project Competition’, this allowed schools to be part of this event and design individual comic books about Pentecost. Schools could follow four workshops online with everything they needed on the website ready to be downloaded. Parishes held an exhibition and prize giving for their local participating schools.

“Over 800 children took part and heard the amazing story of Pentecost.”



IT'S YOUR MOVE

It's Your Move and primary school retreats are one of the main focus areas of our work with primary school aged children. Its Your Move is a four week faith based transition resource run in school or after-school through churches or parishes. Since its pilot in 2011 over 400 students have gone through the IYM programme. Our retreat package encourages groups to come away for a day in 5th class, followed by 'Its Your Move' in 6th class and an overnight residential experience. This night away provides opportunity for the students to have a shared experience before moving to secondary school and to focus on important topics like friendship, peer pressure and change, all underpinned with Scripture and the assurance that God is with us wherever we go and whatever changes we may face.

For more information on Scripture Union’s work with Primary School aged children email schools@scriptureunion.ie



A WORD FROM THE
CHAIRPERSON:

DO I MAKE SPACE FOR GOD?

It's important and good to ask ourselves this question; "How much Space do I give to God to move in my life?"

At the end of a day, week or year to ask;

"How was God active in my life"?

"Was I cooperative"?

"Was I Thankful"?

I enjoy watching young people as they grow into what God has for them. A young man fills his time with boy stuff and activities, similarly a young lady with all that keeps her busy- and then when love comes the agenda adjusts to facilitate the relationship. What's happened? The realisation that to have a healthy relationship you have to make adjustments to the way you spend your time. There comes a point where wordlessly walking kicking leaves is an enjoyable and fruitful event in the relationship.

So what about our relationship with God?

Do we spend time being still - just taking a walk with God, with no purpose, agenda or desired outcome? Just. Being. With.

I enjoy having targets, a to-do list and accomplishments to achieve. But if I treat my relationship with God like that then I am reducing it to being another business meeting where I petition God for my agenda of needs

and wants -even if they are noble ones. I also enjoy learning and acquiring knowledge. It is so easy to fill my head with knowledge about God, but not actually walk it out with Him. What if we all went into our day open to what God might bring up, open to where He might lead - going to God with a blank slate?

It's such a privilege for us all to be part of what God is doing through Scripture Union, to see the doors of opportunity that have opened up to us and to be part of what God is doing in our lovely Island It's my hope that we can have the courage to allow God the space to move unencumbered in and through us in our work which is;

To encourage young people on Their journey with God

To show that God Loves them

That He has a special future for them

And that we are committed to be there for them along the way.

On behalf of The Council of Scripture Union I would like to thank all the staff and you our partners for being part of this privilege.

Dirk van der Flier
Chairperson Scripture Union Council

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS WORKING WITH SCRIPTURE UNION

CHERYL WILLIAMS

Scripture Union has been a significant part of my whole life and I cannot believe that I have been privileged to be employed by Scripture Union for 25 years.

“Some of my friends laughed at me when I told them I had signed a contract to work with Scripture Union for 2 years and I am still here!”

I think that after eight years I was being described ‘as being part of the furniture’; but unlike the real furniture, my role has changed many times during the twenty five years I have been employed by Scripture Union. From being the secretary to the General Director (and learning not to touch the many piles of paper on his desk), to book-keeping, supporting camp leaders with bookings and general administration, and being a fount of historical information, my job is a rewarding and enjoyable one.

I was reminded recently that ‘administration’ is also a spiritual gift; and not just my personality type. It is of deep satisfaction to me to know that my gift fits into and is a part of the whole ministry of Scripture Union and that God uses us all for His will through our work.

My life has changed too – I have had the pleasure of serving on camps and CSSM even meeting my husband at a Scripture Union camp. These camps remain very important to young people, and close to home for me, they are a massive support for my own children, who also continue in the tradition of attending; and growing spiritually on camp. I love that Scripture Union is a family with many volunteers and a few staff working towards the same goal. I have met and worked with many wonderful people. I am humbled by the sacrificial time and resources that so many volunteers give to this wonderful ministry.

Cheryl Williams

NEW & EXCITING SCRIPTURE UNION FILM SERIES

TO REACH THOUSANDS
OF YOUNG PEOPLE

There are some very exciting developments within SU. We are embarking on a very exciting journey of creating an 8 part film series.

The Scripture Union film Series is designed to create a cost effective, scripturally faithful, interdenominationally sensitive, high quality, creative and engaging video resource that removes obstacles to faith development, identified by Irish teenagers. Over the past 5 years our research spells out a lack of understanding of the unique claims of Christianity and an unfamiliarity and difficulty in understanding the meaning and relevance of the biblical stories. Young people today are asking the big questions of faith and without any credible engagement or defence of Christianity they are quick to walk away.

So we are currently in the process of scripting 8 episodes. Each episode will be 15mins in duration split into three parts.

The following episodes, with draft titles, are based on research from Irish young people and the questions they ask; each specifically targeted at equipping young people with answers and empowering them to hold the faith with confidence and dignity.

1. *How did we Get Here?*
Reasoning for a supreme being
2. *Are the Gospels for Real?*
Are the gospels reliable?
3. *Did Jesus actually rise again?*
Was it an historical event?
4. *What was Jesus like?*
Encounters with Jesus



FEATURES



5. *What's Jesus got to do with me?*
Understanding the big picture
6. *What's the deal with Suffering?*
Where is God when it hurts?
7. *Why do Christians have no fun?*
Tackling Christian Stereotypes
8. *Aren't Christians to blame?*
What should mission look like?

We're delighted to have the production company 'Tiny Ark' to produce and film this Film Series with Greg Fromholz as Director. Jonny Somerville will be the host of the series along with guests and a host of volunteers. Filming will be done in studios, on location around Ireland with some specific international filming trips. All is being done to ensure that this resource is of high quality, relevant and faithful to God.

There is still a shortfall of €30,000 and if this is something that you would like to partner with us in then please email Jonny Somerville. jonny@scriptureunion.ie



ADVENTURE RETREATS

A dynamic combination of:

- Relevant faith-based topics
- Interactive talks
- Outdoor adventure activities
- Reflective exercises