



Looking towards 2025

We have really enjoyed celebrating the end of the year across Thrive, by adding in something a little different to our regular groups – film nights, a nerf battle, Messy Nativity, Christmas biscuit decorating – lots of opportunities to finish the term with some fun! It also brings the chance to encourage and thank our amazing volunteer teams, both adults and young people, through a party and our fourth Young Volunteer Celebration with our partners InterACT, which saw 21 young volunteers achieve through our award scheme. We are who we are, because of the brilliant people who give their time, energy and compassion to get involved in their community – marking this is a great place to end the year!

This term at **Messy Church** we have had a lot of fun welcoming back families old and new. We decided that the building work inside Stainbeck Church was too messy (even for us!), so for October and November we relocated to the Methodist Centre. We were encouraged that people kept coming and we were able to share time together in a different space. We've been going 'back to basics' a little bit, thinking about what God is like, and who Jesus is. In December we had our annual Messy Church Nativity, which we changed up a bit this year by enjoying a selection of crafts before telling the Nativity story together. As always, dressing up as an animal or an angel proved to be the most popular!



One parent shared their reflections on what volunteering meant for their child:

"I'm really grateful for this encouragement of his community action/service of others and it's lovely to see him spreading his wings." Our young leaders have been continuing to do a great job at Messy Church, and we look forward to some new young leaders joining in the New Year.

Totally Tuesday has felt a very different group since the summer holidays, as we have said goodbye to older members moving to WOW, welcomed a new team of young volunteers and had some new group members join! Seeing older young people welcome those who are new and younger has been really encouraging and helped the new group settle well together and keep coming back each week. We see the strength of our Young Volunteer programme in practice as the team grow in confidence and ability and use their experience of being in the group to shape it for their younger peers. Each week we see interesting conversation and questions as the group listen to one another and share their opinions about topics which have an impact in their lives – jealousy, comparison, gratitude and what it means to be loving to ourselves and those around us.



We have had a wonderful start to this academic year at **WOW** welcoming lots of new faces that have moved on from Totally Tuesday and it was lovely to see many of our older members returning after taking a break before the summer to concentrate on their GCSE's.

We started the year by meeting with our young volunteers who have been instrumental in making decisions on topics to be covered over the first term. Our first topic was science and faith which really opened

up some big discussions and questions, especially with our visitors. We once again made up snack packs for Homeless Street Angels which has been a wonderful initiative led by the young people and very much appreciated by the charity. It has been really great to see the friendships grow within the group, the new members settle in so well and the young volunteers really taking to their roles and growing within them.



We have also welcomed new young volunteers at **Drop In**, who are supported and encouraged by those who have volunteered before. We have a core group of young people who come along and also regularly meet new people who appreciate the space to relax and socialise after school. We spent a couple of months using The Cabin (more details below!) while Stainbeck Church had building work, which brought some joy and challenges our way. We met a lot of new people who were walking past on their way home from school and some have continued to come after we've moved back into the church. The young volunteers enjoyed organising games on the grass, so we appreciated the mix of indoor and outdoor space. It was a challenge to fit everyone in, which has helped our understanding around how The Cabin can best be used in the future.

It seems a while ago now, but in the summer holidays we welcomed 45 children for our annual **Holiday Club**, 'On Your Marks!' We had great fun with our Olympic theme as we learned that we are all invited to be a part of Jesus' team as we travel on our journey of life together, with everyone having a part to play.

A number of young people from WOW and TT came and supported Holiday club as young leaders. They each brought their own gifts and skills, and it was brilliant to see them taking on new roles and growing in confidence during the 3 days.

Holiday Club requires a lot of adult volunteers, so a big thank you to all those who joined us to help lead teams and activities. It's always such a pleasure to see people from all the different churches combining their gifts to make Holiday Club a fun and special time.



There have been a few mentions of **The Cabin** above, which is the name that we have settled on for the new youth building in the grounds of Stainbeck Church! It has been exciting to see it develop this year and, as the year ends, the finishing touches of cladding on the outside and furniture on the inside have been completed! We have been helped on the way by many people; local workers, volunteers from QBE insurance on a work day and the young volunteers who have been supported to get involved in DIY.

We are working with the young volunteers to plan the launch on Sunday 26th January from 2-4pm, so that they can be involved in all the different aspects of the celebration. This is such a good opportunity to have a go at developing skills around event management -

programme planning, advertising, risk assessments, through to running activities, welcoming and communicating on the day. Please do join us for the launch – we'd love to see you there!

We are saying goodbye to Sarah as the year ends, as she is moving to Scotland with her family, which is a long held dream! We will miss her compassion and organisation, which has brought so much to WOW. Thank you for your support and encouragement this year, which creates space and opportunities for children, young people and their families.



Hannah, Helen and Sarah, Thrive staff team