

God4U Mission Report

Introduction:

After a very busy week with events happening all over the area we need to have some sort of an initial review of the God4U week. Because of my special perspective at the centre of the whirlwind I'm able to give some idea of how it all went. From the individual church perspective it may be that it seemed to pass by – all depends on the level folk were able to commit time and energy in to the events during the week.

This report will focus primarily on the Aylsham part of the week. North Walsham had their own team and full programme of events and I only heard in passing how particular events went. Also the Bure Valley events were to a great extent independent – I have asked Kandi to report from their perspective soon.

Following a general review of the week I will make suggestions about future work together.

Launch Day:

Beginnings are very important and can often flavour the work that follows. This was a good start.

Having helped set up things at the Town Hall I went to the Bure Valley Railway station to meet the train from Wroxham; just a few of us and the Salvation Army band in a quiet station. And then the train arrived and 150 plus people got out! The buzz and sense of excitement was great to see, and as people arrived on the bus at the Town Hall that buzz continued – I was particularly please to see how interested folk were about the other churches' activities and the conversations going on at each stand (not to mention the cake and strawberries!).

The Songs of Praise went extremely well. The numbers there have been estimated at 240. The rain fell before and after but we had a clear spell at just the right time with thunder rumbling during the latter part of John Hibberd's talk. I had a lot of positive feedback from those who attended just from the experience of all being there together as churches praising our God in the centre of town.

A lot of hard work went in to the day with the load falling heavily on Pauline Andrews and Keith Bonner after Gary Chatburn was moved to Manchester suddenly. Keith took primary responsibility for the Railway and Pauline for the Town Hall parts of the day. They did brilliantly and thank you to all who volunteered to help on the day.

Schools and Youth:

We were able to do a lot of assemblies and classes during the week either as one-offs or, in the case of Swanton Abbott school, a series throughout the week. Our ability to gain access to the schools is down a great extent to the good work already being done in different churches to reach into the schools.

I would highlight, however, the work we were able to do in the High School. A concern of mine for some time has been the limited contact we seem to have with

the school but with the recent employment of Richard Amies as Youth Pastor at Emmanuel Church we had the opportunity to build contacts in a fairly short time. The plans he put together worked admirably. Before the week there were two assemblies at the High School when the events were advertised, with some enthusiastic response. During the week the RE teachers allowed the team (plus Richard and myself) to be involved in lessons – actually the pupils were given a free hand to question us on any subject, which is always an interesting experience. Hopefully we will be able to build on these positives with future contact.

The two concerts went well. Wednesday's affair was not as well attended as hoped for, we are in exam season and I suspect that probably led to a low turn out. Guvna B on Saturday was better attended with some 200 youngsters present – the artiste was excellent and spoke clearly of faith while building a good rapport with the audience.

I would add that the pre-school and primary events went well. The former were as much about the carers and mothers as the children.

Events:

There were many events of different sizes going on during the week – coffee mornings, barbecues, lunches, etc, the World Cup night, regular events in the churches where team members were able to share.

However I'd like to highlight three events of which I heard particularly good reports:

- The "Faith as we age" event. The team members who attended were very impressed with the event, an idea they had not seen used before but will suggest to other mission planners in the future.
- The Cambodia event was well planned and attended. A good opportunity to show the church at work in the world.
- The "Night of Colour" events here and in North Walsham were popular.

Thank you to all who worked hard in preparing and planning each individual opportunity. Many people of all ages had the opportunity to hear about God in many different ways and to have the chance to reconsider faith.

Through Faith Missions:

Through Faith Missions has been our partner in putting on this week. In particular I'd like to commend John Hibberd's efforts on our behalf. For some 18 months he has advised and supported us in the preparation for this week and came and led the team with great energy.

John brought with him a team of 26 (I think!) divided between the different venues during the week, 10 of whom worked from Aylsham. A number of those team members were old hands who expressed particular positives about our week – rarely have they had such a busy time prepared for them and the sense of so many churches working together well.

For the week to work there also needed to be a lot of background administration. Mike Garwood from Emmanuel was particularly helpful in organising

the accommodation, the lunches, and the evening meals – to have achieved the week we had with only minor hiccups was excellent work.

Also a base was needed. Particular thanks go to the new Captain at the Salvation Army, Chris Mulryne who gave significantly of his time to give us access to the Hall - and tea and coffee.

Money:

Thank you to all the churches and some generous individuals who have given significant amounts of money to make this God4U event possible. We still have some outstanding bills to pay over the next few weeks but we have the resources. Once the outstanding payments have been cleared we will want to give a gift to Through Faith Missions for their help and support. I will be in touch soon about that.

Where to now?

For me it has been a long two years since the initial idea was mooted with Churches Together in Aylsham, and the last six months have been particularly busy. The end result has been a very successful week in a number of ways – the churches have been seen working well together, new initiatives have been taken which I hope will be continuing after the week is over, and a large number of people in the town have had the opportunity to reconsider God's place in their lives.

- ***It could be that we consider this enough.*** We've done it but now we can go back to our own churches and keep working as we were. There's nothing wrong with this but maybe that will miss an opportunity and lose momentum.
- We could perhaps maintain the God4U emblem and use it in the town in future ***one off events*** – be they concerts or dramatic presentations. This would mean using Churches Together as the instigator of such events, maybe a sub-committee? This would also mean some rethinking of CTA finances.
- ***Can we do it again?*** Some people were enthusiastically looking for this at the end of the week – being personally extremely tired I was not too receptive. But having done this once, and successfully, a repeat would be somewhat easier to achieve – certainly on the practical and organisational side. But not next year! Perhaps we could begin tentative plans for a God4U2 in a couple of year's time?