

*the* **KEY**

*unlocking potential*

**KEY  
COMMISSIONING  
EVENT**

Church of Christ the King Milnthorpe  
15th March 2016

Was it a meeting - was it a service - was it a party?

In truth it was a bit of all those.

“Exciting”

“Energising”

“Really good news”

These were some of the comments heard at the end of the evening.

## **The background**

In welcoming people from the Christian communities across the Kent Estuary, Rev Ruth Crossley said that it was 7 years ago that the first discussions about a church youth project started. Initially it was the Anglican churches of the Kent Estuary Group. Those involved quickly spotted the need for it to be Ecumenical and the Roman Catholics and Methodists joined in.

An early decision was that the churches should employ a professional youth worker and the task therefore became one of fundraising – a long slow grind of applications to trusts and funders. Two years ago a meeting of representatives and interested people from the Kent Estuary churches heard an update on progress and from that a refreshed committee was formed. One of the purposes of this event was to provide an update on what had happened since that meeting.

## **Where is KEY now?**

Ruth handed over to Peter Clarke who became chair of the KEY Committee soon after the meeting. He explained that by last summer all the early effort had made it possible to contemplate recruiting a worker. The original idea had been that one of the churches would act as employer but further advice suggested that really KEY should itself employ the worker and manage its funds. KEY had therefore registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). It had used the standard charity commission template and the Committee had become the founding trustees. He introduced Ruth Crossley, Irene McKay, David Stretton, Wilf Gill and Linda Baverstock, his fellow Trustees.

The rules for a CIO mean that the initial trustees appoint their successors or any additional trustees (up to a total of 15). Any such appointments would have to take account of the geographic and ecumenical spread because KEY remains a direct agent of the churches; one of the ways that the local church communities can engage with young people.

The Trustees had decided that they would start to recruit a worker when they had funds for 2 years of employment. In fact, KEY now has (or has been promised) sufficient for 3 years. There was a good response to the advert and they were delighted to be able to appoint a skilled and experienced youth worker who relished the idea of working in a church based setting. Emma Banks took up the appointment in the middle of October.

Having a professional youth worker was central to the vision for KEY, but Peter highlighted that the worker was necessary, but not sufficient. The churches cannot outsource their youth engagement to a worker and sit back. Church members and the wider community will need to be involved supporting the project and contributing their time and talents to it, working alongside Emma and the trustees.

He suggested that as well as becoming directly involved, the congregations needed to retain a sense of ownership of the project. For this reason, the Trustees wanted to hear peoples' hopes and ideas. They would be meeting soon to develop their strategy and they wanted as many ideas as possible to feed into that process.

They have a vision of the general shape of the strategy. The core is direct work with young people in a variety of settings. Helping young people achieve their potential (the KEY strapline) also involves engaging the wider community, breaking down the myths and stereotypes and building up opportunities for a

two-way exchange of skill, knowledge and perception.

In addition, there is the opportunity for the church communities to listen to what young people can tell them about how church and faith look to them. Young people can help congregations understand why so few come to church or to faith. Their voice can help churches learn how to engage and to open opportunities for young people to find God.

KEY seeks to help young people achieve their potential in a broad and holistic way. It is not narrowly focused on sharing the Gospel. It is however up-front about being established by the churches and being faith based.

KEY is the churches demonstrating and sharing God's love as it actively gets alongside young people in our communities; work which is already underway.

#### **So what is KEY actually doing?**

Emma Banks then described some of that actual engagement. She has only been in post since the middle of October so things are still at an early stage and she is still building up the initial relationships and opportunities. However, she described things that are underway, including:

**Work in Arnside.** An existing youth group seemed likely to close because changed local authority policy left it without a leader. The young people asked KEY to consider working with them. Emma now supports them and a Youth Committee. They are developing an active programme and are engaged in fundraising to meet the costs of the youth club. It is proving fruitful ground for getting alongside young people and helping to develop their skills and perceptions.

**Work in Levens.** There is an existing youth group in Levens and Emma has been invited to explore with them how she may be able to help both the young people and the adult volunteers to develop and to ensure that standards of best practice are maintained. This is at an early stage and it remains to be seen how it develops.

**Work in Milnthorpe.** Emma has begun exploring with young people in the town and with people who might be volunteers, what might be needed for young people – and how it could be delivered. There is initial interest in the possibility of a youth café. Interest is building and it will be a question of exploring options over the next couple of months.

**Work in Dallam School.** The school has invited Emma to base herself in the school a couple of days a week and to develop activity as part of the school community. She has started a weekly “drop-in” and developed an activity group. She is also undertaking one to one work with young people who are coping with particular social or personal challenges and are referred through the school. Some of these young people then become part of the other activities that Emma is leading. The school clearly values Emma's input and there are further opportunities to be explored.

**Work in Dallam Boarding House.** Emma has been invited by the matron to develop specific activities for young people who are living in the school's Boarding House. Her initial work is about working with young people in years 7 and 8 to develop a sense of community and to develop their confidence as part of it. A further phase of work will look outwards to the wider community.

Emma emphasised that the pace of development and the scale of the work very much depended on the support that might be available. **KEY needs volunteers.**

She outlined a range of different opportunities there are for people to be involved. These included:

- People who could join the trustees bringing particular skills relating to safeguarding and to administration
- People with skills or knowledge who would be happy to share that with young people, helping them develop their competence

For example, the youth committee in Arnside is looking for someone to help them develop book keeping and financial management

- People to help run youth sessions and support activities
- People interested in developing a new project in Milnthorpe
- People to become “Friends of KEY” supporting its work through prayer, fundraising or communication

She encouraged anyone who thought they might be interested in getting involved in some way to speak to her or to one of the Trustees. She confirmed that information would soon be available through the website: [www.theKEYproject.org.uk](http://www.theKEYproject.org.uk)

For Emma contact 07960 451542  
emmabanks22@yahoo.co.uk

For Peter Clarke contact 015395 65845  
peter@heversham.com

### Ideas for the future

After Emma’s presentation, Rev David Stretton invited people to discuss in small groups their ideas and hopes for what KEY should aim to be doing over the next couple of years. There was a buzz of conversation and people’s ideas were caught on post-it notes.

Amongst the ideas shared in a brief verbal feedback were:

- Establish a “Friends of KEY” so that people can stay connected
- Use the website and Parish News/magazines so that people can be kept informed
- Include a young person’s element in the potential redevelopment of the Milnthorpe Methodist Church

- Connect with the Milnthorpe Primary school
- Ensure that the worker has a high standard of support in her professional role
- Use Social Media
- Develop a Youth Worship community
- Help Dallam School to reach out more into local communities
- Attend Sunday services in local churches to talk about KEY and engage volunteers.

All the post-it notes were displayed on a table. They will go to the Trustees as part of their away-day when they are working on the strategy.

David Stretton then asked people to reflect on what their own contribution might be. He pointed to a form on the service sheet which enabled people to leave their contact details and to make any offer they wished. These forms were later collected and will be followed up.

### In the name of Christ

From that point, the event moved into a time of prayer when all that had been talked about could be offered to God. As Ruth introduced this, she highlighted that it was also a time when those gathered could share in commissioning Emma, the Trustees and all who are involved in any way with KEY.

Rev Sue Wilson led an act of collective prayer; David read from Saint Paul’s letter to the Church in Philippi and Fr Frank Slattery led the act of commissioning.

Everyone then moved through into an adjacent room for tea, coffee, cakes and buns – and conversation. It became something of a party celebrating the coming to life of KEY. It was a happy time together that complemented the act of worship and the opportunity to be informed and updated.

**It was indeed a meeting,  
a service and a party!**