

### **Ruth's Third Newsletter from XLP, South London**

Hi all,

I hope you're well and had a wonderful Christmas and New Year. I've been getting back and stuck straight into things again since I came back to London in the New Year.

The last week of term before Christmas was a huge success. That was the week of our Christmas tour where we toured round some of the different schools we work in, in our borough teams within the five boroughs. It was an extremely tiring week with my early morning wake up call being at 3.45am and not getting back to bed again until 11.30pm most nights! It was such a joy to perform to the kids at these schools though, as having visitors to come in and perform is quite an unusual event. It was really great to be witnessing to more students from these schools than normally attend our clubs. They really got involved and there was much audience participation during the appropriate moments. Some of the specific kids who my team are involved with at Northbrook School came up to us afterwards and were really inspired and wanted to take up drama as a hobby! Some kids also thought I was actually Cheryl Cole!! This week was filled with so much fellowship, encouragement and God's love. The end of the week was finished with a student/staff meal where we all got together and handed out our secret Santa gifts to each other!

The New Year has also brought so much encouragement and answer to prayer. Live Lounge has doubled in size with the numbers of kids who come along, and it is now not only an all boys club, but we have had several girls coming for the last couple of weeks too! A brother and sister in particular who we have been praying for have been turning up each week and have really been opening up to us about their lives which is another answer to prayer. They live with their Mum, Aunt and three cousins. Their Mum and Aunt are heavily involved in Witchcraft and their Dad (the same for both the girl and boy), when he was still living with them, used to heavily sexually abuse them. It has been evident the enemy has been getting in the way, preventing these two kids from coming to Live Lounge for the whole of the winter term, but since Christmas they have both been coming along and bringing their mates too! Praise God!

We are starting to bring in a 'God slot' at Live Lounge during dinner time. Over the past couple of weeks we have spoken to the kids and got them asking questions and thinking about things which are more explicitly Christian. This has been going really well, the kids have listened and responded with some very interesting ideas and we are beginning to see doors which we can now open in their spiritual lives.

Northbrook school has been quite unsettled over the last couple of weeks. Every time we have gone into work in the school we have witness around five big fights at lunchtime. There was one in particular involving two girls where an ambulance had to be called and there was talk of them being involved in rival gangs. The kids seem to sense whenever there's a fight going on and all get really hyped up. The kids who we've built some good relationships have been very honest and open to us about fighting within the school which has been very interesting.

I have been mentoring two girls from my church for the last three months and the New Year has seen this develop too. Before Christmas, we were meeting whenever they could manage it and going for a coffee so we could all get to know each other better and become more familiar and comfortable with each other. This all went really well and I have now implemented a more structured plan with us meeting every other week and one of these weeks in the month getting involved in a social activity, the other week in the month being more of a Bible study/prayer time. The girls have given me a list of issues of most relevance to them at the moment which we will be working through during these Bible study/prayer times. Yesterday we met and looked at boundaries and 'how far is too far?' type of stuff. I was a bit uncertain as to how well they'd respond to me suggesting doing Bible studies, but they both responded positively and the feedback from them was very encouraging! It was one of the girls' 18<sup>th</sup> birthday on Wednesday just gone and so we had a lovely little celebration with cake and music at The Barn youth group that evening!

I have also begun a regular Bible study with a girl from church who I've become really friendly with. We're discussing things and being accountable to each other which I find is really essential for me as I'm helping to guide and shape the spiritual lives of the kids I'm working with!

My involvement in the worship team at church has also been developing. The guy who heads up the worship, Rupert, has organised two worship bands that have two worship leaders in each, and lead once a month, so each band will be doing the worship every other week. I am in band two and am leading worship on the fourth Sunday of every month. This has been a great opportunity to bring some songs from church at home, All Saints, and to also learn some new ones from my church here, Forest Hill! Also, we have rehearsals the week of our band leading which is always a good time of fellowship and jokes, but can be quite demanding. Rupert wants us to start knowing the songs we're doing on the Sunday off by heart!

Last weekend I put on a concert to fund raise money for my trip to Ghana. This involved me doing some flute, piano and singing pieces along with some friends, including Mark and my Mum playing too! My Dad also came down for the weekend to help out with the concert. The weekend was a great success and I raised quite a good sum of money to go towards my trip. My host family were great and were really welcoming to my family, very happy to put them all up for the weekend! We all had a very enjoyable weekend and it was great for Mark especially to come and see where I lived as he'd not been before this point!

Well this week has been filled with much planning and preparation for our trip to Ghana on Monday!! There will be three groups of us out there which will all be assigned to different things, but we will all get chance to have a go at everything. One group will be involved with doing some teaching at the secondary school, one group will be doing drama, dancing and singing stuff in assemblies and classes in the primary school and the last group will be heading up the sports teams of football for the boys and netball for the boys. I will be doing work in the primary school and also heading up the netball team (even though I've never played netball in my life!!), so I'm really excited about that! Before I go, I'm getting my hair braided by one of the Mum's from church who does her daughter's hair all the time. Hopefully I will look OK!

This weekend, before I go off to Ghana, is the weekend of 'Sound' (the big youth even in Peckham (refer to old Newsletter)) which is going to be manic as my youth worker is away this weekend! So basically I've opted to drive the van to transport all the stuff from Streatham to Peckham!!! I bet you're glad none of you are going to be driving on the streets of London this weekend!

So I will sign off, leave you with some pictures and prayer points and am back for half term in a couple of weeks once I have returned from Africa! Once again, I so much appreciate your ongoing support and prayer. Thank you so much and I hope to see many of you during half term!

With lots of love,

Ruth xxx

### **Prayer Points**

Please pray for:-

1. Youth Alpha in Live Lounge will develop and become more of a central focus for the kids to participate and respond
2. Peace will be restored at Northbrook and that there will be a better atmosphere there after half term
3. That God will use me and give me clarity and words about mentoring sessions with the two girls
4. Safety both getting to and from and in Ghana for the whole team
5. Wisdom for the team when out in Ghana, to know how to respond to people and what to say

Piccies!



Christmas Tour Cast and Crew



My Pastor Nigel enjoying my playing during the fund raiser



Fund Raiser



Me and a few of the girls at The Barn youth group on Wednesday nights