



Archbishop Justin has written an [editorial](#) for the latest edition of Premier Youthwork magazine, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

Read the article below

I can remember a time when my children would watch one film on repeat. At one particular point that film was *Sleeping Beauty*. In it - the Disney version at least - the princess falls asleep for two decades before being woken and beginning life again. I wonder what differences you would notice if you had fallen asleep in 1991 and only just woken now?

There would of course be big, visible changes on the landscape: the internet, new technology, even how much we are prepared to pay for a cup of coffee! All of this would amaze you. There would be some trends, expectations and assumptions which, while hard to define where they came from, are now in the air we breathe.

I'm certainly no expert in Christian youth work but I know that if you were to awake after 25 years you would be struck by the extraordinary changes in this field, both in the landscape and in the atmosphere. You would notice how many more youth workers had been trained and deployed in the Church, notice how the Church is the largest provider of youth work in many towns and cities, and you couldn't help but notice some great practice and sacrifices. In the atmosphere you might be surprised to notice a whole positive subculture of music, initiatives, heroes and great examples of people working together. On the other hand, it wouldn't be hard to see the unfortunate lack of any youth work in so many churches.

I want to look forward rather than back. What is it we would love to see characterising Christian youth work? I would love to see young people...

...**being disciples of Jesus.** Imagine seeing hundreds of thousands of young people thriving as disciples, as whole lives are lived towards him. Across the Church it can be our tendency to offer experiences, good times or fulfilment. But Jesus calls us to follow him and there is no greater challenge. Shane Claiborne says in this [issue](#), 'We're not losing young people because we're making the gospel too hard, but because we're making it too easy.' Imagine if our young people set the pace in following Jesus, with all their hearts and souls and minds and strength, rejecting the narcissism of the culture, the self-obsession which destroys so much of our contemporary life: rather than revolving lives around themselves they orientate their whole lives around Jesus Christ. To see this will take investment and sacrifice, it will mean making this our priority; in prayer, time and resources.

...**being witnesses to Jesus.** It is still the case that the majority of those who profess faith do so before the age of 21. Let's set our sights higher than just trying to hold onto those born into Christian families and maybe reaching a couple of their friends (something youth work is great at). God has the eyes of his heart on every young person, and so should we. This is the task of the whole church. We are all called to be witnesses to Jesus Christ. The only way anyone ever gets to know about Jesus is because someone tells them and shows them. A friend recently told me how in a conversation with a 15 year old girl about Jesus she turned and looked him full in the face. With tears running down her cheeks she asked, 'Why has no one ever told me this before?' Imagine in this next 25 years, millions of Christians ready, able and willing to bear witness to their faith.

...**being servants of the kingdom.** These young disciples, these true witnesses are called to give their lives for the biggest vision possible: the hungry fed, the refugee given home, the broken healed, the imprisoned freed, the lost found. It is a global vision, a kingdom which reaches across

nationalities and continents, a care for whole planet commitment. This is the kingdom of God. The vision of this must be set before young people. This is a kingdom worth giving everything for – because it is the only thing that will last forever. A church which is radically open and true, where lives are transformed by love.

Of course it might seem like a dream. But it's one worth staying awake to make a reality.

4 min read

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