

BRISTOL BAPTIST COLLEGE



Luke is a second year student at Bristol Baptist College, with a placement at Honiton Family Church

Luke Mansfield started at Bristol Baptist College in September 2013. Before that he'd worked as a youth pastor and for the London City Mission. He and his family had always been part of larger churches, so his placement at Honiton was a whole new experience for him. The church had 22 members, a weekly attendance of about 30 and nearly everyone apart from Luke and his family were elderly. However, Luke was encouraged because the congregation knew they needed to change and wanted to work with someone who ensure that they were 'taken out of their comfort zone.'

God gave Luke a vision for a church of all ages, somewhere his own family would feel at home. He knew there had to be radical changes for this to happen and so he sat with the leadership team and shared with them the idea that, while God never changes and the gospel never changes, people do change; the church needed to find a way to present the gospel in ways local people would grasp.

The leadership and membership agreed to explore new ways forward so that church would not just be about attendance on Sundays but a community to belong to and a safe place to grow.



The church changed its name to Honiton Family Church. The structure of the services was changed. New things were added without abandoning the best of the past. New ministries were begun with children and young people. A monthly evening service in the local pub was launched. And people prayed.

In the last 12 months the church has grown to 42 members and there are now 70 in attendance on Sunday mornings. A number of people have become Christians. The one toddler who came along with his grandparents when Luke first started is now joined by around 20 other children every week. Before this year there had not been a baptism for five years. January 2015 saw the fourth in 12 months.

The church has a new lease of life. Many have rediscovered their first love. Everyone is excited about what God may do among them in the future.



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Luke and the congregation know they are not yet the finished product but are determined to continue to follow God's leading as they become a community in which all are welcome, all can meet Jesus, and all can grow in relationship with him regardless of their background.

Luke attends the College two days a week in term time. On one of those days he is working towards a degree in theology. On the other, he is engaged in the College's ministry programme. This is where he learns about prayer and spirituality; he is tested to see that his character is suited to the task of church leadership; he learns how to reflect on his own practice so that he is constantly thinking through how God might make his ministry even more effective; and he enjoys the opportunity to talk informally with staff and students.

The College, like the others in membership with the Baptist Union of Great Britain, is not funded by Home Mission. Its income comes mainly from fees from students, occasional grants and from direct gifts from the churches. Through students like Luke the College makes a significant contribution to the mission going on among the churches.



Luke says, "One of the aspects which has been most helpful to me during this period has been being part of Bristol Baptist College. I have learned so much and had my thinking stretched, eyes opened and found support and wisdom from both the students and tutors. Through the process of being at the college I feel that I am being truly formed into the minister God is calling me to be and I believe it is having an impact on the church in Honiton."

Stephen Finamore
Principal,
Bristol Baptist College



Please pray:

- » Give thanks for the new lease of life which has come to the church, and the sense of excitement about what God has in store
- » For Luke and his family as he continues to juggle study, church commitments and family life
- » For other students serving in Home Mission funded churches around our Union as they seek to bring a fresh approach to mission and ministry
- » For the staff and students at Bristol Baptist College, and those testing a call to ministry and further study

