



FestiveNews

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The same today



yesterday & forever

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever”

HEBREWS 13:8

Never before have these words held so much meaning to our generation. Most of us will not have lived through anything quite like what’s going on now. However, in a time when all else is changing and uncertain, we can remain certain of one thing – our Hope, our Saviour, constant and unchanging. For many this is an anxious time, whether it be health, finance, the strain of day-to-day living in restricted circumstances, even the unknown of “how long?”. Thankfully we can take great comfort at knowing He is on the throne and Lord over all this.

For our students this is a very unsettling time indeed. A large proportion of their lives have been gearing up to this point – working towards the qualifications that will move them on to their next step. If you had said to them 6 weeks ago that schools and colleges would be closed and their exams cancelled, I doubt anyone would have believed you. And why? Because for the majority of students, attendance is a “constant” and sitting their exams a “certainty”. These have been pulled out from beneath their feet without warning and I imagine it will take a while to sink in. Many will have questions and uncertainties about “what happens next?”. School closures doesn’t just affect exams:

- Some CUs were looking forward to their Easter outreach.

- A few CUs were just getting off the ground after months of prayer and planning.
- How can students share their faith with their friends if they don’t see them every day at school/college?
- Students isolated at home with unsupportive/non-Christian family, unable to look forward to fellowship outside of the home.

Praise the Lord for these wonderful young people and ask He keep them in faith!

As a team, our heart has always been to inspire and equip students in FE to share Jesus. That hasn’t changed one bit! It’s just going to look a little different over the coming weeks/months! Social media and email will be more important than ever, as I’m sure many of you will have found in your own local church setting. So please pray for us as we continue to write to students and work hard to prepare resources that will equip them to share Jesus from isolation. I’d encourage you, as we have all our students, to read the rest of Hebrews 13 and find how much hope it brings and rings true today – then let verses 20-21 be our prayer for you, and your prayer for our students.

Rhian



1. Hi Daniel Tell us a bit about yourself!

My name is Daniel and I live in a place called Harold Wood which is half in London and half in Essex. I have just finished my two years in Sixth Form studying Media, Business and Sociology and plan to take a gap year before moving on to heading to University (hopefully Durham) to study Psychology in Education.

2. What led you to start the CU in your college?

The Sixth Form I attended is attached to the school that I went to from Year 7 and I have always felt that a Christian Union would be a great thing to have within the school. However, I never felt I was the best person to do this until I was having a conversation with a few parents from my Church at the school Open Evening where they were asking about whether we had a Christian Union or not and I walked away from that conversation thinking if I don't start this group, then who will. I remembered a verse from the Bible "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few" (Matthew 9:37) and remember thinking that there are so many people who pass through this school who don't know Jesus and something needs to be done about that. So the next day I sent an email to the Headteacher asking to start one and she was really supportive and the group started the next half term.

3. As you approach the end of year 13 what have been some highlights of your time running a CU at college?

I think seeing the same people come back each week and these people growing in confidence e.g. being willing to pray out loud, volunteering to read the passage or asking questions. I think my biggest highlight was during our time in 1 Peter. We spent a week focused on 4:11-18, thinking about what it looks like to be a CU, thinking about how we should love one another and be hospitable. We spent the week thinking about how even though we are in different years or in different friendship groups etc. we should be united, saying hello to each other, praying for each other and just generally living for Jesus together. And then that week I saw several moments between members in the group doing just that as they walked around the site. That was particularly important at the time because we were all drained, it was the end of a long half term, some of us were struggling with loss or health issues and we just needed that reminder that God has given us fellow Christians and we should love them and be willing to spend time with them.

4. Why is mission and outreach so important for CU's? What have you guys done in this area?

As I explained earlier, the fact that so many people were walking through the school each day that didn't know Jesus, was one of the main reasons for wanting to start a Christian Union and therefore meant that mission and outreach was always very important for our CU and I assume this is true for the majority of schools and therefore mission and outreach is key in any CU. We made sure that each half term we would do some sort of mission or outreach whether it was inviting people to an event using posters and word of mouth or going out and about around the site. My two favourite events were the one we did for Pancake day last year and the one we did for Pancake day this year (and that isn't just because I like pancakes). Last year we did a Grill a Christian

event with pancakes and put posters up and sent information to tutor groups, this went really well and lots of people came along, I think it is fair to say that many of them came just for the pancakes but actually as the session progressed become really engaged in the Q&A and asked lots of questions and seemed to be thinking about who Jesus really is. This year we planned to do the same thing again but not many people came along so we changed it up a bit and went around the site giving out pancakes and saying they were from the Christian Union. And despite the fact this was not what we planned we believe it was God at work because it meant that we were able to have some great conversations with people and led to some great comments as well.

5. What have been some of the challenges in running a CU? Either for the whole CU or for you personally or both.

I've led the group for 2 years on my own and did a talk every single week. This was a real challenge as it can take up quite a bit of time as I want to feel confident with a passage before I do a talk on it or lead a Bible Study on it. But it has also been one of the best things about running a CU because it gave me some more set time to read God's word each week and helped me to continue to set my eyes on Jesus. I think another challenge as well has been tackling the battle where other clubs have taken place at the same time and people who were coming along to the CU decide to stop coming and go to them instead and that has been hard and at times quite discouraging.

6. Will the CU carry on when you finish?

I hope so! My plan was to start trying to build a few people up to running it as a group. However, due to the current situation we are in as a country and the fact that it is unlikely I will be returning to school haven't been able to do so. Therefore please be praying for this, that someone would take a lead on starting it up again when schools go back. Pray as well that I will be willing to trust God with this and know that even though I have been running it, it is Him who is in control of it and has a plan for it and for what will happen next.

7. What are you off to do next?

I'm taking a gap year before heading to university. What that gap year will entail at the moment I am uncertain on. I am currently talking to a few Churches about working with them for a year which I think will be really exciting. Then in the long run I want to work for a church leading youth and children's ministry.

Two years of CU leadership

An interview with Daniel Armond

Daniel is a great example of a student who as well as working hard on his studies has also worked hard for the Gospel! He has run a CU almost single-handed the last two years at his sixth form. We asked him about it, the highs and the lows and what the future holds.



Festive on film

As an organisation we are changing the way we resource students.

Back at the end of February when seeing people was still a thing you could do (!) we met up as a team for one of our regular staff days. This staff day was a bit different though, we had invited Max from a Christian evangelistic media organisation called Speaklife to come and train us in how to produce YouTube vlogs (video blogs) and basic videos at home using nothing more than a smartphone.



The training was brilliantly helpful and little did we know how key the timing of it would be. With most students now in lock-down they are, more than ever before, looking for stuff to watch that will encourage and inspire them. Its not that students weren't into YouTube before. The research we did a few years ago at Soul Survivor highlighted the popularity of YouTube amongst the students we support with 63% of students we spoke to saying they watched content on YouTube at least once a day (51% said they watched content several times a day). We are finding that if young people want to know how to do something they are more likely to look for a talking head on YouTube giving them the information rather than something written down. We are increasingly convinced that video is therefore the best way to resource and inspire students in setting up and running Christian Unions, sharing their faith and living for Jesus at college.



Festive on film is not a new idea. We have been creating content for a few years now with our 'Student story' videos and the 'Light on a Hill' video being good examples (check them out on our YouTube channel if you haven't already – search for Festiveuk!). These video were filmed however by professional filmmakers and took money and time to produce. We simply don't have the budget to regularly produce this level and quality of content. With all this in mind we are now moving towards doing more vlog style content filmed by our staff and SSWs at home. This type of content is great as its cheap and easy(ish!) to produce and still really popular with young people on YouTube.

So whilst we are not moving away totally from written resources, expect to see lots more video content featured or created by Festive going forwards. Though the medium of how we resource may be changing, our aims and vision have not! We are still passionate about working to equip and resource Christian students to share Jesus with their friends and do mission together in CU's.



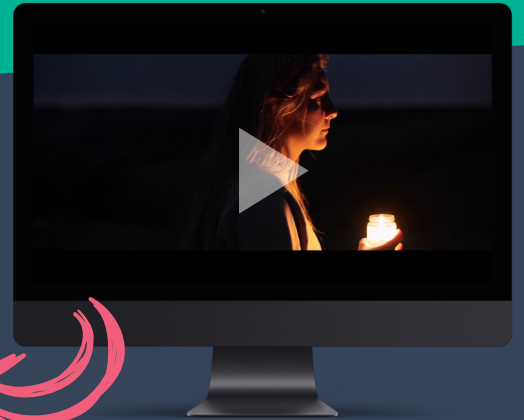
Please pray for our team as we develop these new videos. It doesn't come naturally to any of us to be in front of a camera but we want to do what we can to help the young people we support. Please pray that we are able to connect with and inspire many more Christian young people as we move forwards with this vision and work. Pray for inspiration, for ideas and for the young people to respond positively to what we produce.

See the next page for an overview of some of our video content so far...



Story videos We produced these a few years back, our first step into the world of YouTube. We filmed seven different students sharing their stories of how they lived out their faith at college/sixth form covering topics like peer pressure, evangelism, balancing studies with mission, setting up a CU, and prayer. With over 1500 views these videos have undoubtedly encouraged many Christian students around the country!

Light on a Hill A short video but a big project. Filmed around an inspirational spoken word piece, written by Claire on our team and performed by Glen Scrivener this visually beautiful film aims to inspire students to let their light shine bright in their college or sixth form. With over 1000 views so far the message is reaching a big audience.



Responding to Covid:19 as a Christian student These are our latest videos that we have launched in the last few weeks. In response to the Corona virus. The message of them is very simple. Many things might be grinding to a halt around you but the Gospel isn't! Through a series of 4 videos all filmed on mobile phones at home, four of our team share why and how to keep meeting as a CU (digitally), keep sharing Faith and keep praying for your friends. These videos are a taste of the type of lower budget resource style content we will be filming more of over the coming months!

Welcome to our new trustee Jon

Jon(athan) Fortnam is Dean of the Law School at Aston University having spent the previous 30 years practising as a litigation solicitor. He is based in Birmingham and married to Karen, with children Tom, Amy and Mia. Jon came to faith as a teenager and CUs have played a significant part in his growth as a Christian. He says: *"The sense of belonging to something bigger, that was so relevant and inspiring was really important to me as I tried to make sense of things and put down foundations for the person I wanted to be. It's also interesting that the issues I grappled with as a student, in the company of others still come up for thinking about in church leadership. The opportunity to support Festive and its work in Schools and FE colleges is very exciting to me and it's a privilege to be able to serve in some small way with Pete and the Board".*



Jon's passions outside of church and work include cooking, jazz music and reading. His long term objective for the year is to cycle 50 miles in one go.

Trusteeship

We are still looking for more trustees to join our team. Trusteeship is a fantastic way you could support our work and vision. Our trustees meet three or four times a year to discuss and look at keys areas of Festive's work, strategy and governance. All but one of these meetings are now going to take place over video conferencing meaning that physical attendance at a meeting will only be needed once a year! The trustees hope that this change will make it possible for more people to consider joining the team as the time commitment will be considerably reduced as a result. If you would be interested in finding out more about how you can support us in this way please do contact us at info@festive.org.uk