

What a difference a Gap Year makes

When I started my final year at University in Luton, I was already thinking into the future and what might become of me once I left the relative safety of Studentdom. I know Liz had a great time when she did a Gap Year with Carrie in 2002-3. She really enjoyed the work she did at Christ Church and Emmanuel, so I thought I should make the most of her experiences and see what this Gap Year thing was all about.

The process started with looking in all the obvious places. Viz-a-Viz, Oasis, YWAM and even in my local Church in Luton, but nothing really struck me as a challenge. I had been involved in Youth Work since my Dad introduced me to the 8-11's at Christ Church and wanted something that would gather all my experience together and push it to the next level. Then one day a letter arrived at the Christian Union and a friend handed me the flyer saying 'I thought you might be interested in this...' And my world changed dramatically.

Less than six months later I found myself graduating and literally the next day I had moved to Cardiff. Somewhere in the last term of uni I asked God to give me the money for whatever might happen and challenge my faith and trust in Him. Every single day for the last six months I have relished the challenges and rejoiced in God's provision.

Of course I didn't just move to Cardiff, I am part of a team of about 30 people who run Glenwood Church and Going Public, a charity aimed at providing resources for South Wales. Being part of this team is great, but something even better is getting to be part of the Gap Year team. I work with five amazing people and our team leader, Emma, is driven to seeing us grow through the activities we do. We settled in really quickly thanks to one of the boys on the team being a local lad. He showed us around and got us to explore the social side of a Gap Year. Something we are all incredibly grateful for.

Part of any Christian Gap Year is the time you spend learning about God and the theoretical side to Christianity. When I signed up I got a Connect leaflet but I didn't take much notice, it was only when I met my mentor and was told that I'd spend one full day a week learning about young people that I realised what I'd let myself in for. Since that first week we've learnt about many topics, all focused on Youth and our own personal development as leaders.

I'm so glad that I stayed in the UK. It's easier for me to relate to the plight of the local young people than if I was in a different country. I never imagined how hard it would be to live this far away from Essex, I had taken Uni in my stride surely Cardiff would be no different. Turns out I was way off the mark. Home missions are just as tough as international missions. Young people value leaders and positive role models wherever they are. International mission may look exciting, and looking up from where you are reading this may pale in comparison, but the need is still here on your doorstep.

God challenges me everyday, my gifts have grown immensely and my passion has deepened. This particular Gap Year opens up opportunities for trying new things. I'm currently organising a conference, working in a town in the Rhondda Valley, teaching sex education in schools and writing articles for a new website.

A Gap Year is something I would highly recommend. Whatever is stopping you can be dealt with by our God who is bigger than the distance to Wales, and that puts such a

smile on my face. I can't wait to be back in Essex to celebrate Easter, but I don't enjoy leaving Cardiff for fear that I'll miss something big!

Karen Fisher

Gap Year Trainee

<http://www.goingpublic.org.uk>

<http://www.glenwoodchurch.org>