



Discovering your talents

Lizi shares about how she has taken time out to discover how she can use her talents...

Knowing what to do after sixth form was really difficult for me. I didn't want to end up studying for several years and then still realise I have no idea what God wants to use me for! My brother had taken a few gap years and then gone to uni for a few years but pulled out to take up a job offer, whereas my older sister had gone straight to uni from school. So, there was no 'expected route' so I wanted to take the next step that was right for me.

In Year 13, I decided not to apply for uni, and take time out to find out where God wants me to go. Originally I was going to do an art foundation course and then an art degree so I visited a few places and got a place at a college. However, I was always a little apprehensive about whether I was ready to leave home and my family and friends yet, so was looking at places nearby. At the time everyone else was applying, one of my friends Sam, died from carbon monoxide poisoning and he was only 20. We had drifted apart a little bit, but just before he died we had started to catch up again on Facebook! This event was really eye opening and with old friends being hit hard by it, it made me re-think some things. I decided that maybe I did not want to spend so much of my life studying, but instead to be out in



the world making a difference and helping people to see what matters in life.

This all happened in the middle of the PYD course run by NYMO, which I joined to enhance my faith, make more friends with people my age in the diocese, and of course to join in with the awesome trip to Australia for World Youth Day 2008. It has been exciting meeting other enthusiastic Catholics and learning so much from them, and I wanted to get more of this experience after the programme

was over! It has helped me to discover the things that are important in life to me - my faith and friendships.

A few weekends after we lost Sam I helped out at a LUMOS weekend as a small group leader. Although this was tough and really tiring, I really enjoyed it - it was so much fun having discussions about Jesus, with young teenagers and helping them to strengthen their relationship with him! These events have helped me to discover more about myself and

my talents - being a leader required a lot of organisational skills, and confidence. Although I don't always have the self-confidence to be myself in front of loads of people, I found out that talking to kids about Jesus in smaller groups was something I really enjoyed and got a lot out of. Forming relationships and being a point of call for their questions was really important at the weekend. Working in a team was also encouraging as I was happy to help out others and be useful where I was needed.

So, after all these experiences they got me thinking that maybe this was something I wanted to do more permanently. The other leaders were so encouraging and enthusiastic that I really looked up to them, and still do! It was exciting that sharing my passion for Jesus in this way like they do, could also be for me. Before, I'd only ever really worked with kids a lot younger but having decent conversations and being challenged in them myself was so much more beneficial.

Consequently, I looked into joining a gap year organisation, but I'd left it a little late to apply for September. Something else that put me off was the fact that the kids I work with in my own parish in the youth group and now the confirmation class really need encouraging and a vibrant passion for Jesus. Therefore I think maybe I'm needed to stay around my own town and serve them in the community I had grown up in. I remember a few years ago at an event called 'Spring Harvest', we were asked to write 'our mission', what we thought at the time we might be called to do. Mine said, "my

purpose is to evangelize and mission in Chesham/abroad with friends and people my age/youth." Maybe I was listening to God correctly....

As I now have a 'free' year, so far I've made plans to help out in my parish with lots of activities. My dad has just started a theology course and so he's around a lot to help get things rolling. Our parish is starting to study a programme looking at the mass through a series of house groups, which I plan to attend. My sister is taking part in the Salt and Light course and so as part of her project she is leading a youth version of the house groups, which I am helping her with. All these things happening are really exciting, and it's even more exciting to be working with people I have grown up with and can inspire and be inspired by. I have also been helping out with other local youth groups as a result of befriending the youth workers at LUMOS. All this experience has helped both my confidence and my spiritual knowledge which is forever flourishing. It is exciting and such a great opportunity to have a year out to help out with all these things that I have such a passion for.

It is difficult this year to get on with everything I want to and manage my time wisely! I have to work a few hours a week in a shop, just to make sure I can afford things! My parents have been so supportive and reasonable about everything, that I know God is looking after me! I know that he has got amazing plans for me, so I have learnt to take steps of faith when I think that I have discovered what he's designed me for.

Thinking into the future, I am currently investigating the possibility of doing a youth ministry course possibly in London next year, so I can continue to serve locally and enhance my skills. All the time I am trying to search, I know that I have to pray that God will lead me in the right direction. A few of my new friends I met through NYMO events and I have recently started up meeting for a prayer group which has been something keeping me better on track and encouraging me. I know that God has placed me in such a fruitful network of friendships so that he can do great things with us! With the knowledge of the support from others supporting and praying for me, I feel confident that God will do great things through me.

I can't say that so far I've been completely sensible - its been hard getting in to a new routine and with my friends and boyfriend on gap years as well, its been tough to be disciplined to search and to make time for God. So my advice would be, if you are thinking of taking a year out, to make sure you don't waste such a great opportunity that may never arise again (as my Dad keeps reminding me!). Also, take steps of faith and make sure that you ask God to guide you through each day as you make new discoveries, friendships and decisions. You also need patience, confidence and the willingness to serve, and to use the people God has placed around you to help you grow.