

When Revd Danny Driver became the parish vicar at Christ the Redeemer, Barnwell, he used sport ministry to build new bridges between the church and the community – creating links with local schools and finding innovative ways to serve the community through sports.

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A small child jumps up in the air while playing a game and others around him are running

Danny believes sports ministry helps improve people's lives – physically, socially, and spiritually – as well as being an effective way for the church to make new connections with young people.

– Sport can bring people together from all sorts of backgrounds and unite them, – Danny explained.

"As a church, it was a glaringly obvious opportunity for us to use sport to connect with new people, to form community, and to share the good news of Jesus with them."

The sporting activities at the church include a Friday night Youth Group, multi-sports activities and an after-school club providing sports alongside crafts to teach the Bible to children.

– There are 16 kids attending the after-school club, 10 have never had church contact before, – said Danny.

– These young people had no idea that being in a church could be like this, their perceptions of church have changed.

– Part of our vision is to see young people's lives transformed through the power of the Gospel. –

A multi-sport camp is also offered to the entire community for one week during the summer holidays. Alongside sports, games and a BBQ, attendees are encouraged to learn about Jesus.

Danny says that last year more than 40 children took part, and three new families began attending the church as a direct result of being invited to the event.

Danny reflected: – Whilst setting up new sporting groups, we have started to see growth in the number of children and young people that we are regularly in contact with, it's wonderful. –

**More information:**

- Christ the Redeemer church received Â£250,000 from the Church of England's Innovation Funding scheme. It supports a full-time youth and children's worker, two trainee sport and faith ministers and one part-time administrator. It has also paid for sports equipment.
- Innovation Funding aims to help find creative approaches to challenges facing the Church, supporting new ideas particularly aimed at young people and children; lower income communities and UK Minority Ethnic/Global Majority Heritage populations.
- The Church of England is actively involved in a wide range of sports, both by providing Chaplains, and running sports projects. Eight Dioceses: Birmingham, Blackburn, Ely, Gloucester, Guildford, London, Norwich, and Rochester are 'Sport and Wellbeing' Dioceses, where the Church aims to promote physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing through sport.
- The Church of England's Vision and Strategy for the 2020s is helping us to be a Church which proclaims and lives out the Good News of Jesus Christ afresh in every generation.

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