



Monthly Reflection, June 2015

Celebrating volunteers

The year I spent as a volunteer, just after I graduated from University, changed my life. Through it I gained in confidence and learned many life skills. Above all, it kindled in me a desire to share my faith with young people which shaped the path my life would take, as I moved to university chaplaincy, through school chaplaincy, to residential youth work and teaching.

One of the great joys of these roles has been the privilege of recruiting and managing many young volunteers in a variety of contexts. In doing so, I have never failed to be struck by their generosity in sharing their time, talents, enthusiasm and creativity in a truly committed and unstinting manner. It has been a pleasure to see the growth in the volunteers and humbling to see their witness to the joyful message of the gospel as they open their hearts to see Christ in those they serve.

Volunteers are vital to our society: strengthening communities and sustaining our food banks, churches, youth groups, arts projects and so much more. Their value to The Children's Society is indisputable, where they have been at the heart of the charity since it was first established in 1881.

Today more than 9,000 people volunteer for The Children's Society, supporting disadvantaged children and young people, assisting in running the network of 100 shops and raising funds and awareness in their local communities. Through their efforts they enable The Children's Society to offer vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people a vital lifeline.

For more than 30 years now we have, as a nation, celebrated the significant contribution that volunteers make to our society in Volunteers' Week. This year, from 1 – 7 June, we have a chance to say a great big thank-you to all those who give their energy and commitment in support of the many causes that enrich our society. For those who are considering volunteering, it is an extra encouragement to learn the truth that St. Francis of Assisi expressed in his prayer, 'that it is in giving that we receive.'

See the volunteering opportunities in your area at childrenssociety.org.uk/volunteer.

By Caroline Stanton, lay chaplain, St Mary's University College, Twickenham.