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Powers, Inequalities, and Vulnerabilities: Mission in a Wounded World

Paper proposal for IAMS-2020 Study Group: Children, Youth and Mission

Conveners, Children, Youth and Mission study group
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20 minute presentation, 10 minute discussion)

**Youth Ministry as a Cultural Shock Absorber: A Study of Soul Revival's Youth
Ministry at Gymea Anglican**

Stuart Crawshaw

In the early 1990s, Gymea Anglican Church was finding it difficult to adapt to cultural change and was becoming increasingly irrelevant to young people. This led to most teenagers at the church leaving when they reached the end of high school. The church could not retain its own youth let alone reach out to unchurched youth. During this time, youth in the Sutherland Shire were vulnerable to anxiety and depression leading to a youth suicide rate that was amongst the highest in Australia. The youth at Gymea Anglican, who felt they had no voice, were empowered to develop a new initiative they called Soul Revival. They developed a new structure that gave youth a place where they belonged and had influence. This initiative resulted in retention of the existing youth, growth from 4 to 500 youth, predominantly from unchurched backgrounds and a safety net for at least 2 teenagers who were successfully supported through an attempted suicide.

This paper forms part of the methodology section of a PhD in Congregational studies. The title of the PhD is Youth Ministry as a Cultural Shock Absorber: An Ecclesiological and Ethnographic Study of Soul Revival's youth ministry and church planting. This project explores how youth ministry adjusts to cultural change and then helps the institutions of the Church modernise, acting as a cultural shock absorber. This paper will use Richard Osmer's pastoral cycle to explore how Soul Revival was able to act as a cultural shock absorber for Gymea Anglican Church.

Rev Stuart Crawshaw serves as the Senior Pastor at Soul Revival Church, Sutherland Shire, which is an Anglican Church plant in Sydney, Australia. He is also Chaplain to the Cronulla Sharks National Rugby League club. Stuart is a PhD student with the Sydney College of Divinity.