

**APCM Ministry
reports
2023**

Creative Technology report

2023 in the world of Production has been another year of growth. As Aldates expands, our volunteer team are helping carry significant roles across the life of the Church. From weekly Alpha nights, Student nights, Sunday Services, Youth Events, Arise and the introduction of Behold - there's a full calendar for us to facilitate.

In November 2023 James Muscat left his role as Production Manager. James was key in driving the system upgrades in 2022 and into 2023 and much of what we are now able to achieve is due to his hard work and diligence. Ben Burnett who was on team as Media Content Producer has now expanded his role to bring Sunday Production & Film Production together into 'Creative Technology'.

Ditie Eradiri, a School of Ministry Alumni (22/23), has taken on the role of Livestream Pastor and is playing a key role in facilitating the live hosting teams that we have on the stream every Sunday morning. The livestream community is growing, and we're seeing increased interaction week on week.

As we look forward to the next year, our goal is to continue to hone our craft to ensure Sundays remain distraction free environments for people to encounter Jesus. Through sound, lighting and video we hope to be able to create a space where people can worship and pray in an environment that's feels safe and comfortable. Team training is a priority this year to expand the skills of those on the team and to help them discover new gifts they may have not been aware of.

Finally, this year we hope to build deeper community amongst the team. Production can very often be a 'giving' ministry, and so investment into the spiritual wellbeing of this team is vital. Socials, training, community nights, masterclasses are all on the agenda for 2024.

Creative Team report

The past year has been a time of strengthening skill sets and streamlining processes for Creative Comms. Beth joined the team in October, bringing her expertise in photography. She now takes a lead in this area and has worked hard to develop a strong team of volunteer photographers. The team now work on a rota to capture great photos on Sundays and at mid-week events.

Our social media, run by Lydia, continues to have a strong following and a regular content schedule in place. A number of our sermon reels have gone viral and have impacted thousands of people whilst on their daily scroll through Instagram. As well as Sunday content, we have also captured and shared around 15 testimonies which ran concurrently with sermon series. Filmed and edited by Ben and Beth, these videos have allowed us to share what God has done in the lives of people in our church. They have also been a great way to celebrate the diversity we enjoy across all our congregations.

Throughout 2023, we further consolidated our core Aldates brand, which is to be used for central comms. It now serves as an umbrella, which other ministries can sit beneath and build recognition. We refreshed the Aldates Students brand in September, ready for the start of a new academic year. Debbie, our School of Ministry Intern, arrived in September with fresh vision for Student socials, and the renewed brand identity has helped create visually consistent content across platforms. We have also been successful in creating sub-brands for other ministries and initiatives such as Pastoral Care, Aldates Youth, Love Matters, Be Still, and Behold.

The branding for May Morning was a particular highlight this year. The concept, based on two hand drawn cartoon characters (a coffee cup, and a burger), formed a striking visual style which we developed into signage, directing crowds towards Aldates for free coffee, burgers and prayer. The brands playful nature, which we got printed onto coasters and postcards as give aways, helped to disarm any pre-conceived ideas that students might have about a church outreach event.

In September, we felt led by the Holy Spirit to run with the theme of 'Peace on Earth' for Christmas 2023. This turned out to be poignant, due to the global conflicts which emerged at the end of the year. The theme enabled us to speak to these wider issues and declare the hope of Jesus over them.

Worship Team report

Worship continues to be a key way that we enjoy and encounter the presence of God at Aldates. We are hugely thankful for our team of staff and volunteers, whose passion to exalt the name of Jesus in worship and draw others into an encounter with the Holy Spirit, serve to create moments for all to draw near to God.

During the past year we have seen some changes in the Worship Team on staff with Charlotte Simmons finishing her 2-year stint on the team and Kaka Nwokocha joining as Worship Pastor in September alongside Ditie Eradiri continuing to work with the worship and livestream teams.

We welcomed a couple of new School of Ministry Students who have settled wonderfully and serve as a part of the Worship Team across the different ministries of the church (Aldates Youth, Students, Kids and ACT!) as well as on the Sunday teams.

In July we started a new worship night called Behold- a space for those longing to go deeper in worship. It's been beautiful to see this new creative space open up opportunities for people to express themselves through art and dance. Arise continues to be a highlight of the church's month when we come together to worship and pray.

In August a group led at David's Tent which was a lot of fun and this February we joined the team leading at the New Wine Leader's Conference. It's a privilege to see what the Lord is doing across the Church in the UK and to connect with other worship leaders serving God in different contexts.

Aldates Kids report

2023 was an exciting year for Aldates Kids, with on average over 125 children attending each Sunday ranging from 0 to 11 years old. Overall, we welcomed 285 'regular' children as well as many visitors across the year. We created three new groups during the year: we started creche for 1-2-year-olds, split the preschool-year 2 group into two and, in October, started additional groups for Year 4-6 at the 4pm service.

Our Sunday series included 'Filled with Power', looking at the Holy Spirit, 'Prayer', and 'Space Makers', a resource from Oxford Diocese about encountering God in everyday life. We have had All Together Worship mornings each month and regular group lunches to build community. We have continued using the Story Museum alongside the Parish Centre to allow the groups to continue to grow. Our volunteer team has grown in number, from 44 to 60 people, and in consistency of regular serving. We are seeing more of the team stepping up in leadership and confidence and lots of new people are interested in joining too.

We ran several outreach events across the year, including the 3-day long Holiday Club for primary school aged children, 'Trailblazers', where 120 children became summer campers. We were joined by 'Peter' who taught the children about Jesus, and each day we worshipped and prayed together. We went out on a boat trip and to Christ Church sports fields for an afternoon of games, as well lots of other fun activities. We also ran a Light Party in October, where children invited their friends to an alternative Halloween. At Christmas, we ran a Family Service where the children and youth performed 'One Bright Star'.

It has been a year of change in the Kids Team – in August we said goodbye to our three excellent School of Ministry students and in September we said goodbye to our amazing Kids Pastor, Emilie Middleton. Rachel Smith stepped in to cover both Kids and Families until the end of the year and then stepped down at the end of January 2024 from both roles. Hannah Webster was appointed Kids Pastor and started in February 2024.

Youth ministry report

Aldates Youth has seen massive growth and many blessings in 2023! We started off the year with resurrecting NightLife, an interchurch, all-youth worship night, and followed it up with weekends away for the older (Reality) and younger (Ignite) youth, where we saw youth encountering God in various ways. We've hosted 2 more NightLives since, with 6 different churches and groups joining us, and added an Aldates Youth worship night called Echo to run once a term.

We also hosted a Reality Spring Ball in May as an opportunity for youth to invite friends to come be part of our community, and off the back of it, 1 youth who didn't grow up in church has become regular members of Reality and have even brought their family to church on Sundays. All of our weekly gatherings, including Reality on Friday nights, the midweek girls and guys Bible studies, and Ignite on Thursday nights, have grown throughout 2023 as a result of youth inviting their friends. Youth are also making decisions to follow Jesus, as shown by the 3 youth who were baptised in 2023.

The new 2023/24 academic year brought Ditie Eradiri as a part time youth pastor (shared with worship and media), who has brought new energy and vision to the ministry. He is especially passionate about raising up a youth worship band and pairing up youth with mentors to walk alongside them in their faith journey.

Ignite on Sunday mornings has almost doubled in number with an influx of year 7s, and we have loved the challenge of finding enough great volunteers to lead this group well and squeezing as many youth as possible into a living room on Thursday evenings.

After a year of praying for more opportunities to be present in schools, we were presented with an opportunity to help a couple students at Oxford Spires academy start a Christian Union. It is a joy to go into the school once a week to meet with students, both Christian and non-Christian, and encourage them in their faith and pray with them during their lunch break.

2024 started off strong with another NightLife, when the church building was filled with youth praising God and many youth dedicated or re-dedicated their lives to Jesus. We also took 19 Reality youth on a weekend away in February and look forward to the Ignite weekend away in March with 36 youth signed up. God continues to bless this ministry week by week, and we can't wait to see how encounters with his love will transform our youth.

Students

As we seek to see students formed by Jesus for a life of purpose, we have had the privilege of discipling roughly 120 students a week at our weekly Student Nights, ably supported by our 30 volunteer leaders, and sending them out to transform their university contexts. Our February weekend away saw 80 students encountering God powerfully and fuelled for mission, and our Sunday student lunches continue to build community & friendships amongst the students.

Several of our outreach initiatives expanded this past year:

- On May Morning we served 1300 bacon butties & hot drinks to Oxford residents & students
- At Christmas we welcomed over 400 students into the church for the return of Beer & Carols.
- We also enjoyed another sold out May Ball with half of those attending not a part of our community.

These events play a key role in sharing the love of Jesus and the welcome of the church to non-Christian students. They are often our first point of contact with people who later join us on Sundays & Thursdays or come along to Alpha, where we hosted multiple student tables across all 3 of the courses run this past year.

We've also invested in using social media as a form of outreach this year, having seen a rise in students joining Alpha or even coming to faith through our online content. These new videos have gained around 200,000 views over the past year as we seek new ways of reaching the lost.

Bridge the Gap has seen 80 people per week across both the men and women's teams, with approximately 75% of these not being Christian. The men have seen 2 new leaders developed and 13 students try Alpha this term. The women have invested in 2 new leaders, had 5 women try Alpha and hosted 30 women at social events this calendar year.

We have invested in around 30 high-potential students to intentionally equip and raise up as leaders across year. This is a talented group who are already leading in various spaces in St Aldates and across the city. We are training them across 5 Cs: character, calling, chemistry, competency and charismata, seeking to equip them to as leaders with skill and integrity both now and beyond their time at university.

We have seen big changes in the department this year, with Emily Chisnall now on maternity leave and having said goodbye to Aidan Hampton in March. Lauren Eradiri joined the team as our newest Student Pastor last September and has hit the ground running, and we look forward to Aidan's successor Jonny Abbott, beginning too in the coming months.

Alpha

We ran Alpha three times in 2023, with over 250 people seeking to find answers about Christianity. In addition to many returning team, we equipped and trained 15 new table hosts and helpers, many of whom have just completed Alpha themselves. On each course we had 2-4 student tables with approximately 70 students exploring faith.

We have used different forms of outreach and promotion in the lead up to Alpha including advertisements on bus stops, 500 Alpha keep cups given away, hundreds of Krispy Kreme donuts, 'Why Jesus?' booklets, Alpha invitations, but above all else have had some fantastic conversations and prayed with people on the street.

Of the 250 people, approximately 20 made a significant commitment to Christ, and including these, there are approx. 50 still on an active journey, attending church/groups/student night regularly.

In Jan 2024, we also launched our first Morning Alpha which had approximately 15 guests, with a couple of them make significant commitments to Jesus. Our January Tuesday night Alpha was the largest in the last 2 years, and we plan on increasing volunteer support and to innovate, perhaps launching more courses. We also look forward to welcoming the new Alpha and Groups Lead for this upcoming course.

School of Ministry report

Since 2006, the School of Ministry has been helped over 200 young Christian leaders to discern their calling, discover their gifts and deepen their faith. 2022-23 was a great year, with ten exceptional students from around the world completing the program and going back into work or further education equipped to transform their contexts. Additionally, Kaka Nwokocha, Beth Woods and Ditie Eradiri were recruited to vital roles within our staff team. We're grateful to this cohort for all they brought to our team and are championing them as they continue to serve Jesus.

Our 2023-24 cohort of twelve students are just over halfway through their year with us and are a highly gifted group. We've established a new placement in Pastoral Ministry this year, as well as partnering with Commonwealth House, our international student accommodation, to place a student part-time with them. We have also piloted a non-residential stream this year, with two students taking part, and have worked hard to keep the residential and non-residential students connected.

Recruitment has already begun for 2024-25 cohort, and a number of applicants are already in the interview process. We're grateful to God for all that he's done through the School of Ministry and convinced that he's not finished yet.

Groups report

Groups are key to our vision: through them, we invite people into the heart of community, equip each other to follow Jesus by engaging with the Bible, and encourage one another to transform our contexts. We currently have 46 groups, led by 96 leaders. Ten of these groups have started in the last year, and thirteen of them are focussed on young adults.

Over the last year we've been continuing our focus on planting new groups, and our termly Emerging Leaders evenings are really helping us to do this. We're currently looking to recruit an Alpha & Groups Lead to help support and grow this vital ministry.

Postgrads report

Our ministry among Postgraduate Students has continued to provide a warm accessible community for those dropping into Oxford to study from every continent. Our Wednesday evening 'Postgrads' meetings have been lively and encouraging with over 100 Postgrads meaningfully involved. At the end of the last academic year, we hosted a Postgrads Summer Ball with many of our regulars and their guests enjoying the cultural experience that is a ceilidh.

Before Christmas we taught through the 'Sermon on the Mount', and this term we are enjoying taking in a wider biblical overview through the lens of becoming 'More Like Jesus Now.'

Many postgrads attend Alpha across the terms, and it has been a joy to see postgrads coming to faith in Jesus the last year. Wednesday evenings continue to be a space for bringing friends who are exploring faith.

We had forty students on our Cotswolds weekend escape in November which was once again a special time with many highlights including a classical guitar recital (!) and deep times of prayer, worship and laughter.

Partnering with the Oxford Pastorate, we've just hired out a cinema for an exclusive screening of Terence Malick's 'Tree of Life' complete with critical responses from Rev Dr Jonathan Brant and others. It should provide a thought-provoking evening for our postgrads and their friends. And we continue to join in with the Developing a Christian Mind conferences which facilitate the integration of a student's faith and their research.

Postgrads continues to be a joy as friendships form, new faith is discovered, and possibilities for following Jesus within labs/libraries/governments/industry are explored and pursued.