



## The LST MTh (Research) Scholarship 2019/20

In every generation the Church is tasked with calling young people to live within God's radical love. It is exhilarating and challenging, taking those who fully engage to the frontline of mission and service.

Some of these challenges feel fresh - the rate of change, our response to new technologies, shifting ideas of identity and relationships. Others are old. How do we help young people to flourish and make sense of the Christian faith in this generation?

There are signs that in many places the Church is unsure about how to respond. A sense that old ways of doing things will not work, and a lack of confidence and clarity about the alternatives.

Change doesn't happen by chance. It will require resources, prayer, innovation, impetus and the pooling of knowledge and experience - and it should be informed by theologically reflective research.

In response London School of Theology and Youthscape have committed themselves to increasing the scale and scope of research related to youth ministry in the UK and are pleased to launch a new one-year scholarship beginning in October 2019.

### **The scholarship: research that engages practice and theology**

Applications are now open for those wishing to study for a Master of Theology (MTh) degree with LST. The programme will begin in October 2019 and is full-time for twelve months. The scholarship will cover all LST programme fees for the year but excludes the cost of living and travel expenses

This scholarship provides one student the chance to focus their Master's thesis on a topic that is directly relevant to young people and youth ministry, and this year our chosen focus is young people's engagement with social media platforms and smart phones. The successful candidate will draw on empirical research to produce a theological response to one or more aspects of young people's use of this technology.

This is a unique opportunity to be supported by two vibrant organisations that have come together to produce new knowledge. As a full-time member of the academic community of LST, the student will follow a programme of approved supervised research over twelve months. Supervision is undertaken jointly by Youthscape's Director of Research, Dr Lucie Shuker and a member of the LST faculty.

The MTh is awarded by Middlesex University and the student will submit a thesis of up to 40,000 words within twelve months of registration, which is assessed by viva or oral examination.

As part of the wider Youthscape team, the MTh scholar will pursue their research within a thriving community of practice - working from Bute Mills in Luton at least once a fortnight. The student will have free access to all of Youthscape's training courses and receive a free place at the National Youth Ministry Weekend.

Alongside a MTh thesis, we intend for the results of this research to be adapted as short report for youth workers, and hope that it could lead to the development of a new resource. In this way the MTh scholarship can make a direct contribution to youth workers and young people across the UK.

### **Who is this scholarship for?**

- Those who have completed a primary degree in theology with at least a 2:1.
- Those wishing to research a specific topic rather than a taught programme.
- Those wishing to be a full time LST student.
- Those with sufficient funds to cover living expenses and the cost of travel to work in the Youthscape offices in Luton (LU1 2EY) at least one day a fortnight.
- Those demonstrating a passion for Christian youth work and an awareness of the need for theologically informed responses to the challenges facing young people.

### **The research field: A theological response to young people's engagement with social media platforms and smart phones**

Children moving up to secondary school this year were born after the launch of the iPhone, so it's little wonder the post-Millennial cohort has been called iGen. They are digital natives - their worlds mediated by screens and their relationships increasingly conducted online. There are lots of reasons to be concerned about how young people engage with social media and/or smart phones, and headlines regularly highlight online bullying, abuse, screen addiction or lack of sleep.

Nevertheless, it's a young research field – and the best evidence we have does not appear to be conclusive when it comes to the impact of screens and smart-phones on young people's health ([Science and Technology Committee, 2019](#)). In the absence of clear guidance from health authorities or other government agencies, parents, schools and those working with young people are doing their best to support young people to use their phones wisely.

Alongside emerging sociological and psychological studies concerning young people's relationship to social media, a holistic understanding and response requires us to also consider these issues theologically.

The 2019 scholarship student will construct a theological response to one or more aspects of young people's engagement with social media and smart phones. The research may be a critical and analytical review of existing research or involve empirical research with young people in Luton. While the specific research topic will be established in consultation between the student and the supervisor, the following areas of enquiry could be considered.

- How social media platforms mediate young people's construction and understanding of self-identity, for example their use of avatars or multiple identities and behaviour on social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter.

- How different forms of communication shape relationships, for example how individual or group conversations and messaging apps create a 'fear of missing out'.
- The role of the image in young people's sense of self, others and community.
- The overlap of physical and online space, and the implications for relationships.
- The smart phone as an extension of young people's body and being.
- How patterns of social media use mediate learning and development, including of faith and spirituality.
- How smart phone use creates new experiences of time and social rhythms in relation to work, rest, play and individual and communal time.

Alongside your application form, you are required to submit a research proposal of no more than four pages. It will need to take the title given above, and outline how you would interpret the topic, and what kind of research you would undertake.

More information on the proposal can be found in the 'Research Proposal Guidelines', which is available at the MTh scholarship webpage.

## Youthscape

Youthscape is a national Christian youth work organization, working for the good of young people of all faiths and none. Based in Luton, the team works with young people in schools and the brand new drop-in space on the ground floor of Youthscape HQ, Bute Mills. It is here the team develops and pilots new ideas and approaches that are then shared through national projects. This 'deep and wide' approach involves intense work in one community, leading to the development of innovative training and resources across the UK. Youthscape also has project teams with expertise in specific areas of youth work, including sex and relationships, and mental and emotional health.

The Youthscape Centre for Research exists to support the local and national work of the charity. On a local level this means helping the team access knowledge that will equip their work with young people. On a national scale the Centre produces research that informs practice and innovation in Christian youth work more widely. The Centre for Research produces a quarterly research 'zine 'The Story - Statistics, Trends and Research for Youth Work' which is disseminated widely to churches, youth work organisations and youth workers.

## London School of Theology

For 75 years LST, the largest evangelical theological college in Europe, has been a provider of Higher Education serving the Church of Jesus Christ worldwide. This is carried out primarily in three ways:

- **Educating** individuals in theology, theology and counselling, theology, music and worship, theology and worship, theological education, integrative theology, and biblical interpretation. These programmes are accredited by Middlesex University. Not only is the education of the highest standards but is carried out in the context of a worshipping Christian community that enables students to graduate more in love with Jesus and more committed to his Church and the Scriptures.
- **Equipping** local churches through, for example, evening public lectures and partnerships in mission, student placements, Summer Conferences, Theology Within Reach, and staff members regularly teaching and preaching in local churches across the country and around the world.

- **Engaging** in world-class research through our PhD, MPhil and MTh programmes and through the publication of research by our faculty. In this LST is engaged in the scholarly conversations that shape Christian thought.

Over 7,000 LST graduates have gone on to various fields of service in the Church, the academy, and the marketplace.

### **How to apply**

Applicants will need to send a completed research proposal form and application form to [postgraduate.admissions@lst.ac.uk](mailto:postgraduate.admissions@lst.ac.uk), copying in [lucie.shuker@youthscape.co.uk](mailto:lucie.shuker@youthscape.co.uk).

The deadline for applications is 17<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

Short-listed candidates will be invited to give a 10-minute presentation and will be interviewed by staff members of Youthscape and LST in early June 2019.

For further information please contact either Doreen Rosser, the administrator of postgraduate admission at LST or Dr Lucie Shuker at the email addresses above.