



Scripture Union

Transcript: Myles MacBean on his time as National Director for Scripture Union England and Wales

[Aaron, to camera] Hi there and welcome! My name is Aaron, and I'm here today with Myles MacBean, Scripture Union's current National Director.

We thought you, our wonderful supporters, would like to hear from him as he wraps up his time in that role and as he prepares to hand over the baton to Dave Newton in March.

So, Myles, I have a few questions for you if you don't mind.

[Aaron, to Myles]: Myles, I would like to ask, what have been your highlights working as National Director?

Myles: Wow. Well, there's no single highlight. There can't be a single highlight with an organisation as broad as a Scripture Union, and the time as long as five years.

But people... people are the highlight.

Whether that's children themselves, the young people themselves, the staff, the volunteers, the supporters, it's just been amazing.

It's lots of little tableaux. Like going to a place up north where the Faith Guide was telling me that people take pot shots across the church at night, and she had thought of a wonderful way of connecting with the young people through Lego.

And then the factory across the road got in and started donating Lego and things like that.

It's being on a holiday and being able to participate in a little group and seeing a young leader there really blossoming in the way that he led the group and then you, know the light when you see the light switching on in a child's eyes when they get it.

And then I have the privilege as National Director of getting lots of letters from supporters and hearing their stories. Invariably Scripture Union's been part of their faith journey. And they're just excited about helping to pass on that experience to the next generation. It's just wonderful.

Aaron: That's amazing. It's just a passion. You know, the passion that you have and you can pass it to the next generation for them to have that passion to pass it on as well.

Myles: Absolutely, Absolutely.

Aaron: So, if I may ask, how has God surprised you during your time working at SU?



Scripture Union

Myles: I'd be worried if God hadn't surprised us! You know, especially with me, engineer originally by training, I love to run in straight lines and then God comes in and changes it all. It's wonderful.

Well, Covid hit a year in, and what really, really surprised me was how we managed so well with it. It was before your time here with us, but what I saw blossom out of the staff and out of the supporters was just great creative ways of dealing with the fact that we're all stuck at home on video. And ideas and skills and gifts came out that we would not really have expected at all.

Perhaps the second one that really surprised me was how 150 years after foundation, Scripture Union's underlying principles were still so relevant to today. Encouraging the church to get outside of the box, both physically outside the church but metaphorically, thinking outside the box, so that the eternal unchanging truth can be communicated in a way that the young people today understand and can relate to.

Aaron: Now that's really interesting, encouraging the church to think outside the box.

Myles: And what we find is that most churches want to, absolutely, but they don't quite.

They need the help to allow them to think that through. And that's what's so wonderful about Scripture Union, because it's always put the church front and centre. It's about supporting the local church to do its part in God's mission, and therefore to be getting alongside the church to support them to get alongside young people to journey with them.

Aaron: That's amazing. So, what lasting impact would you hope to leave with Scripture Union?

Myles: Well, you know, it's not all about me. In fact, it's not about me!

But what Scripture Union here in England and Wales has done over the last five years or so is, I think, what it's all about. And it's been built on sure foundations, and it will last.

I inherited a wonderfully revised vision, mission, focus statement. That vision for a generation of children and young people who are really passionate, in a passionate relationship with Jesus Christ. And a very clear mission statement – to create opportunities for children and young people to explore the Bible, respond to Jesus, and grow in faith.

And you know, it says it on the tin – *Scripture Union*. We're all about the scriptures. The power of the Bible to speak directly through the Holy Spirit to children and young people.

And we're a union because we're a collective. We're all volunteers. And what we've done over these last few years is take that vision and that mission and worked out a framework within which children and young people can be reached by the churches that want to reach.



Scripture Union

The other thing that I hope that we will have left over these last five years is a real hope for the local church. They're so passionate to reach out to the children that aren't inside their church, but they're not 100 % sure how to do it.

And all we hear is bad news about children and young people at the moment in our media. And we are in a huge time of opportunity.

I keep saying, in fact my friends in SU are sick of me hearing me say, we're in the opportunity of a lifetime, so let's take the opportunity *in* the lifetime! And, so, we have this opportunity to reach out to children and young people in new ways and journey with them.

We're in a different world.

We're used as a church to speak a position of authority, but in today's day and age authority is to be suspected, not respected.

We need to get over ourselves and be willing to admit when we don't know, and simply journey in faith alongside a young person. And that's the most persistent thing I'd love to see - a hope for the people of our nation. Because they will find in our Faith Guides and our supporters, people who are willing to be genuine, honest, humble and simply walk beside the young people through their faith journey.

Aaron: Absolutely and you mentioned the word a couple words – and you repeated it – ‘passion’. Passion just that word and being on fire for Jesus Christ... Absolutely amazing!

So in March you're going to hand over the role to Dave Newton. What excites you about this next season?

Myles: Oh, so much! There is just so much to be thankful for to the way that God's worked through us for his mission over these last few years.

We've really got a firm foundation now. We've worked so hard to build a model that it is simple enough that almost any church can factor it into their plans and to their context.

And we've got it robust and ready to scale. And the exciting thing, as I leave, is that that's beginning to get picked up by so many churches and we're able to partner with so many other organizations and church networks to really start to scale that up. Because our real desire would be to reach those 12 million children and young people that are nowhere near church.

And to be able to do that, we need to probably get a Grow Community – a group of young people – maybe in every catchment area of a high school in the country.



Scripture Union

So, we've still got a long way to go, but we've built something that is contextual, that is scalable, and is sustainable. If we've got the support from supporters like our friends.

Aaron: Absolutely, and have you seen the impact that SU has made to all the churches. Have you had any feedback?

Myles: Oh yeah, again one of the great things of being the National Director is I can sort of see what's going on in all sorts of places, and it's overwhelmingly such wonderful feedback!

Our Faith Guides are really picking up the lessons from the Mission Enablers and multiplying up. And that's the other thing that I'm really excited about, that I'm handing over in Dave, to somebody who has that similar passion for the '95'. And chatting with him and looking at his career, I can see that just as God did for my season – building the skills and expertise and gifting for me – he's built a different guy there for a new season and I'm convinced he's the right guy for this season.

Aaron: That's absolutely amazing. So, what role can our family of supporters play at this time?

Myles: Oh, you guys can support us in so many different ways!

Supporters are at the Centre of the Scripture Union. We're essentially a group of passionate supporters with a few staff helping out. And you can support in so many ways.

You can volunteer, you can pray, and you can give, so that together we can expand up our impact on those 95% of children who aren't near church.

You can also pray for us in this time of change, that the unchanging word of God will be revealed to young people through Faith Guides journeying with them.

And that the culture of Scripture Union will be maintained as we expand and reach out to more and more churches, and hence young people.

And the other thing you can do is befriend and advocate.

Why don't you find out where your local Scripture Union worker is and try to get to know them and befriend them?

And in your church and in your schools and the like, why don't you try to advocate for what Scripture Union is doing so that we can expand further and further?

You, as supporters, *are* Scripture Union and we'd love you to get more involved.

Aaron: So, Myles, what would be your parting words as we move forward?

Myles: Wow, words... Hope!



Scripture Union

The youngest generation has stopped doing the decomposition that previous generations have done and recognises that it's on shifting sand.

And I've recognised that there is such a spiritual hunger there. And I think as local churches, as Scripture Union, we can have hope that probably for the first time in several generations, we have young people who are searching.

What we need to do is be alongside them, humbly listening to the questions and helping them to answer them for themselves through exploring the Bible.

I think second word would be passion. We need to rekindle the passion for passing on to young people the message of what God has done in our lives, and modelling that in word and deed to these young people, remembering that we don't have to be people who know it all and all the rest of it. We just have to be ourselves!

The most valuable thing in today's generation, the youngest generation, is having somebody who's willing to spend time and to care for them. And then to have the courage to get out there and experiment and do it.

Some of the greatest Faith Guides I've seen as I've looked around over these last few years have been the most surprising people that you wouldn't think are, you know, the cool dude who can get down with the kids. They're the grandmother figure or the uncle figure or whatever. So, to just have the courage to step out there.

And to recognise the privilege. We have the greatest message there is. We have had the privilege of being given that message and let's get on with it.

It's been the greatest privilege of my long career to work in this role. I've seen all my gifts, my experience and my technical knowledge brought together, knowing that God has planned all this.

But that's the same for every single volunteer, every single supporter. Let's recognise the privilege it is that God has called us to be part of His mission through Scripture Union.

And that's really my prayer as I leave, that God would continue to bless - through supporters and staff and volunteers - would continue to bless Scripture Union... to help Scripture Union carry out Christ's mission here to the children and young people of England and Wales.

And I am so looking forward to sitting on the sidelines and watching what God does in this next season. I am really excited.

Aaron: Wow, Myles, I just want to thank you so much for your time, your words of inspiration and encouragement. And I just do pray that the Lord will be with you in your new chapter.

[Aaron, to camera] We are so thankful for your partnership in the gospel. It is down to you that everything Myles has talked about today has been made possible.



Scripture Union

Your continued support really does make a difference. So as Myles steps down and Dave picks up the baton, please join us in prayer for them both.

Let's pray. pray for Myles as he looks to what's next in serving the Lord. And let's pray for Dave, as he helps SU to move forward with the revealing Jesus vision.

Thank you and God bless you.