

## 11. 3Generate and the Voices of Children and Young People Report 2025

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| Resolutions              | <p>11/1. The Conference received the Report.</p> <p>11/2. The Conference encouraged the Church to use any tools available to help educate youth leaders, children and young people on the lived experience of EDI.</p> <p>11/3. The Conference urged Circuit Local Preachers' Meetings to consider how they can involve children and young people in the planning and execution of acts of worship</p> <p>11/4. The Conference recommended that Circuits and Districts bring together dispersed youth populations for activity-based sessions</p> <p>11/5. The Conference encouraged churches and worshipping communities to find ways to make their services more accessible and relevant by updating resources in order to better welcome those who are not familiar with church practice</p> <p>11/6. The Conference encouraged churches and worshipping communities to make full use of available resources to make worship inclusive of all abilities, particularly for those with neurodivergent conditions.</p> |

### 1. Introduction

Following the change of Standing Order 240 at the Methodist Conference 2024, this report will be the first to focus on the voices of children and young people in general as well as reporting on 3Generate. It is important to note that the resolutions and main concerns have arisen from consultation and input from children and young people across the Connexion.

### 2. 3Generate Summary

The Mission Committee received a report from the Youth President and the Children, Youth and Family team evaluating 3Generate 2024 against the aims it set in the previous year. What follows here is a very short summary.

3Generate 2024 was the largest held to date, with 1620 children and young people, 520 leaders, and 310 volunteers attending. Children aged four to seven attended their own mini-3Generate together with their parent or other significant adult; 70 children attended which again was an increase from previous years. This year's venues were the Arena, the Art Station, the Chapel, the Discovery Centre, Eden, the Globe, the Great Outdoors, Health and Wellbeing, the Hope and Anchor, the Park, the Rec, the Tech Hub, the Theatre, the Town Hall, the Well, and Calm.

On site there was also the Action for Hope HQ, where children and young people could find out more about the Methodist Church's aspiration to be net zero by 2030. They discovered ways to contribute to their Church communities and discussed ways to be eco-friendly in their wider lives. There was also the Shoreline space, where children and young people were encouraged to write prayers on postcards to be posted online throughout the year. The Methodist Way of Life theme this year was 'wrapped up in God', and children and young people were given either a beanie hat or a blanket, and could go around the site earning sew-on patches for each MWOL station. The Youth President has seen several of these blankets and hats on their youth visits around the Connexion, and the children and young people take great pride in their achievements through collecting them.

The Youth Representatives were based in the Park. They facilitated questions and activities they devised on the Rep residential weekend in the summer before 3Generate. There were four questions, one for each of the areas we are called to be as Methodists: growing, inclusive, evangelistic, and justice-seeking. The responses from children and young people are discussed in section 5 of the report.

### 3. Youth Visits around the Connexion

An important aspect of the role of Youth President is travelling across the Connexion to hear the voices of children and young people first hand. These visits have been to District, Circuit, and Church events, in addition to 3Generate.

More such visits are planned. Between October 2024 and March 2025 the Youth President visited Bristol, Darlington on two occasions, Yorkshire (a weekend combining Yorkshire North and East, Yorkshire West,

and Sheffield), Wales Synod Cymru, and North West England Districts. They have also visited Methodist communities in Germany, and attended the Methodist Church in Ireland's youth weekend 'Soulmates' for children and young people aged 9-13.

On each visit the Youth President asked questions about; 3Generate, their experience of church and faith, their faith community practice at their church and in the context of larger events they have attended, and what messages they would give the people running the Methodist Church. Many of the conversations children and young people got involved in were based around 3Generate, the responses from which are considered and included in section 5 and 6 of this report. The feedback around 3Generate has been included in the planning of 3Generate 2025.

Overall, as heard in these visits, the main things children and young people like, and would like to see more of, are:

- Shorter and more varied services
- Bean bags and spaces to relax
- Social events involving food
- Biscuits (they were mentioned at every visit!)
- Evening groups and services
- Interactive worship
- Large events, particularly for the ability to make more friends and do more interesting activities

There were many discussions that highlighted that children and young people feel that:

- Services are too dense and hard to understand
- Worship music needs updating
- Children and young people are not catered for or asked to be involved in worship
- Lunches and community events would encourage children and young people to build community
- Churches could be much more neurodivergent friendly
- There is nowhere for them to relax and spend time with friends: church could be that space
- It is hard to be active in church communities when travel is involved

#### 4. Youth Representation

|                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Youth President 2025/2026                | Genesis Padgett                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Methodist Conference Representative 2025 | Alex Day                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Methodist Youth Representatives          | Isaac Amankwaah<br>Dominic Bevan<br>Kunashe Chidziya<br>Joseph Cho Ming Cheung<br>Hugo Hildred<br>Isaac Nicholson<br>Jamie Nyirenda-Scott<br>Destiny Ogbonnaya<br>Genesis Padgett*<br>Reuben Peterson<br>Gracie Silk<br>Lewis Koji Tropman |

New Youth Representatives:

Isaac Amankwaah, Kunashe Chidziya, Joseph Cho Ming Cheung, Isaac Nicholson, Destiny Ogbonnaya, Genesis Padgett, Lewis Koji Tropman.

\*Genesis will serve as a Youth Rep until they begin their employment with the Connexional Team as Youth President 2025/2026 on 1 August 2025.

Youth Representatives who have finished their service:

Luca Barwick Plant, Bea Beard, Eleanor Dixon, Ailish Dooley, Matt Hayes, Daniel Onyett, Amos Rand, Hope Wild, Owen Wilkins, Joseph Zaccaria.

#### 5. Hearing the Voices of Children and young people at 3Generate

The responses to the questions asked by Youth Reps give an incredible source of data and are useful to

analyse and to understand better what children and young people think. It is also worth looking at the questions themselves. Not only are the questions decided by young people with what they want to find out in mind, but they use the opportunity 3Generate provides to talk to children and young people while they are engaged with thinking about Methodism and their faith lives over the weekend.

#### Growing

QUESTION: What would encourage your friends to come to church?

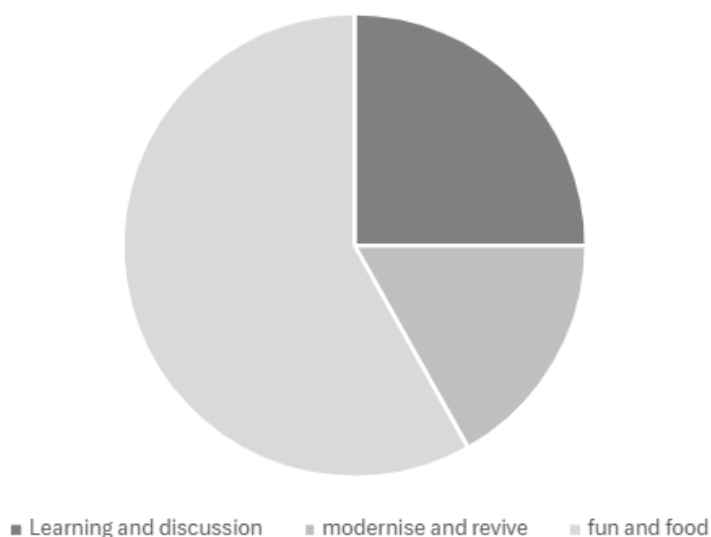
METHOD: A large paper background was set on the fence in the park, and card outlines of flowers and trees were stuck on it. Petals and leaves were cut out, and children and young people wrote answers on them and blu-tacked them to the garden.

#### RESPONSES:

These can be split into three categories: learning and discussion, modernise and revive, and fun and food.

| Learning and discussion | Modernise and revive | Fun and food  |
|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| 43 responses            | 29 responses         | 100 responses |
| 25%                     | 17%                  | 58%           |

Total responses: 172.



It should be noted that food items on their own received 41 responses, making up 24% of the total responses.

It was clear when reading through each response that many children and young people had not considered inviting their friends to Church and thought it would be difficult to do so.

The main learning that can be taken from these responses is that children and young people would like to be valued and considered more in their Church communities. The responses in favour of modernising and reviving worship and groups were asking for their tastes and preferences to be considered. In some communities, change may have never been seen in their lifetime, which means they have never been catered to.

With the fun and food responses, it is clear that children and young people would appreciate being able to relax and have a space to feel safe and cared for. If their lives are spent at school or at home, both of which may be high pressure situations, church may be one of the only places they can go to be with their friends. Making sure they enjoy that space and want to come back is important.

When talking to children and young people about this question, the consensus has largely been that church is an inaccessible environment to which to invite new people with no experience of Christianity. The lack of enthusiasm to invite peers may also be due to current social etiquette. If someone is known to not have a Christian faith, it is seen as disrespectful to invite them to an explicitly religious context, and is seen as a breach of personal boundaries.

### Inclusive

QUESTION: What can the church do to help those that feel excluded?

METHOD: Reps were given clipboards and went around the site talking to children and young people. This worked especially well where there were queues for popular venues and sessions.

#### RESPONSES:

This question had 71 responses which were incredibly varied. The biggest groups of people that were identified as excluded were disabled people and those who are non-affiliated. There were suggestions to improve accessibility for different needs and to not assume any pre-held knowledge of Church practice when planning talks or activities.

While this question had fewer responses, the conversations it prompted were noted by the Youth Reps as being incredibly valuable and may have been capable of giving children and young people ideas of how to be inclusive in their own churches.

### Evangelistic

QUESTION: How can we as the Church help you talk about God in different situations?

METHOD: Children and young people had a token to put in a game of Plinko, which had the different situations written at the bottom (school, friends, and family). It should be noted that this was just for guidance, and children and young people were encouraged to answer for any situation or multiple situations as they felt comfortable. Feedback was then recorded on flipchart paper.

#### RESPONSES:

This question was an interesting one to collate the answers from, as, out of the 73 responses, only around 14, or 19%, answered the question posed above directly. Friends and family received fairly equal attention, however school had 12 responses, meaning only 16% of children and young people had suggestions.

| Friends | Family | School |
|---------|--------|--------|
| 29      | 32     | 12     |
| 40%     | 44%    | 16%    |



While talking to children and young people about this, it seems that many of them have not considered talking about their faith with their peers past a brief mention of their youth group or something similar. This follows the trend seen with the growing question, as few children and young people seemed eager to talk about God outside of their faith communities.

### Justice-seeking

QUESTION: Do you feel supported challenging injustice in the wider world? What do you think is unfair in the world?

#### METHOD:

Do you feel supported to challenge injustice in the world - Two token spinners, one for yes one for no. What do you think is unfair in the world – Children and young people were invited after using the token spinners to record their answers on a piece of fabric and tie it to a mesh wall against the fence.

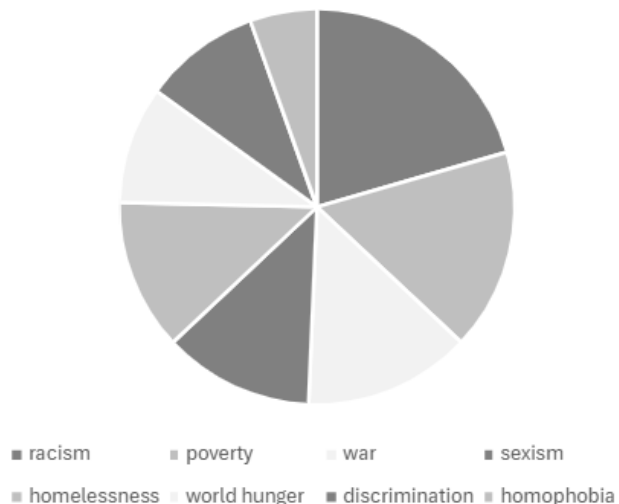
## RESPONSES:

Out of 188 responses for the first question, 153 said yes and 32 said no, so 83% of children and young people at 3Generate feel supported challenging injustice in the wider world. This is great to hear and gives us as the Church an opportunity to respond to the other part of the question.

For the second question 'what do you think is unfair in the world', the majority of answers were single words or short phrases that give a clear message of what children and young people think.

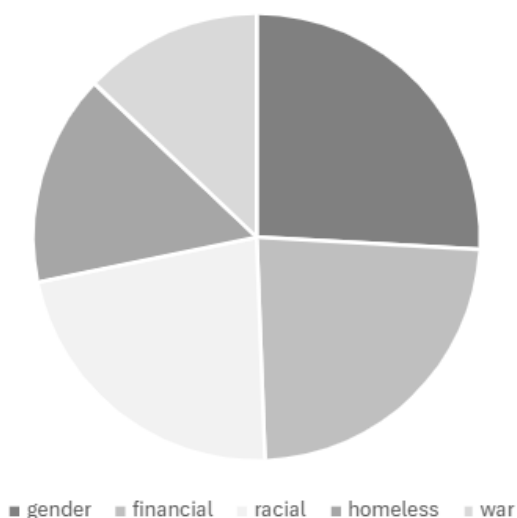
In terms of single words, this was the ranking of the most popular from the 121 responses:

| Racism | Poverty | War | Sexism | Homelessness | World Hunger | Discrimination | Homophobia |
|--------|---------|-----|--------|--------------|--------------|----------------|------------|
| 15     | 12      | 10  | 9      | 9            | 7            | 7              | 4          |



When grouped into broader themes, a new picture emerged:

| Gender inequality | Financial inequality | Racial and associated inequalities | Homelessness and associated inequalities | War and associated issues |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 22                | 20                   | 19                                 | 13                                       | 11                        |



Children and young people are aware of the world around them and, especially at 3Generate, of many social justice issues. It is therefore interesting to note the similarities in the top responses. The most popular four themes reflected in their answers are entirely inequality and discrimination based; children and young people care the most about the way people around them are treated. The most popular single word being 'racism' and the most popular theme being 'gender inequality', show what issues are at the forefront of children and young people's minds and lives.

It was noted as interesting in discussion with the Youth Reps that homophobia, usually a topical discussion choice within Church communities, was so low down on the list, and that despite attention to climate change at 3Generate each year, that also had very few entries.

## **6. Main concerns of Children and Young People**

### **1 Discrimination**

As seen with the Justice-Seeking question from the Youth Rep activities, children and young people are concerned with the amount of inequality in the world and the discrimination to which this leads.

The issues children and young people are concerned about here are things they are seeing and experiencing in their own contexts. They are recognising the ways people are being treated around them, and need a way to make a tangible difference.

In discussion with the Youth Reps, we decided that an achievable goal to help children and young people tackle these issues in their own spaces would be to give children and young people the tools to be educated and help educate others themselves. Therefore, the idea of youth EDI training was raised and is being brought as a resolution to the Conference. This training will need to be tailored towards children and young people and different from the current EDI training that is offered.

### **2 Youth involvement**

Children and young people will be more interested in regularly attending worship if they can contribute to topics or be involved in its planning and leadership.

Involvement in services, especially if in an open and judgement-free environment, would increase their relevance to children and young people. As seen in the growing question, they are asking for their preferences and tastes to be catered for, and involvement is the best way of achieving this.

This will also address the issue seen in the evangelistic question of children and young people lacking enthusiasm when talking about their faith practices with their peers. Children and young people are natural evangelists when it comes to things that they are enthusiastic about and engaged with. If children and young people can feel like a valued part of the church and have their ideas welcomed and used, they will be more likely to engage in conversation about their faith practices with others.

### **3 Youth populations**

Something that I have encountered many times on my visits across the Connexion and at 3Generate, is the issue of dispersed youth communities. Children and young people may be one of, or the only, youth in their Church, and feel undervalued and not catered for. This was seen predominantly in the Growing question. This is an issue seen particularly in rural areas where physical distance and travel accessibility can create more difficulties when bringing people together.

Children and young people have explicitly said on many occasions to me that they enjoy being brought together for larger events. This may mean anything from a few churches together to a district event. 3Generate creates the opportunity for many children and young people in the same districts to meet and form relationships, and the consensus is that they would like those kinds of environment to continue.

In addition to larger group activities benefiting children and young people, it has also been noted by youth leaders that joining together can decrease the workload they face in planning and executing events. There are also youth leaders who are unable to organise such events for themselves, but who are happy to join larger events.

Dispersed youth communities are very common in the Methodist Church. Children and young people in these groups feel undervalued and as though they are missing out on what larger youth groups may be able to do. The underlying theme throughout the growing question was that children and young people want to be catered for and valued, which can be achieved with these types of larger gatherings.

### **4 Accessibility**

When asked the inclusive question, children and young people identified two groups for which the Church could improve accessibility: disabled people and people unfamiliar with Church practice.

The growing question also showed that children and young people do not even consider bringing friends to Church. Making Church more friendly to newcomers can change this.

Disabilities can be catered for in many ways, for example providing an order of service to all, pre-warning alternative worship styles to the usual plan, or offering space to listen while crafting, colouring in, or similar

activities. Disability accessibility is more than simply installing a ramp, and reasonable adjustments need to be made to make sure each person can feel welcomed in a Church context. For example, making a service around the needs of an autistic person may make it inaccessible for an ADHD person and vice versa – checking in with people about what they need is always the best way to be accessible.

It can also be difficult to bring to church people with no experience of church practice. Changes can be made in the jargon used, by explaining when things are happening such as standing for worship or liturgy being read. Even assuming that the congregation knows certain songs or the words to the Grace can be alienating to those that do not. Church communities can also make intentional efforts to be welcoming and include new people, as insular communities and groups can be difficult to navigate.

### **\*\*\*RESOLUTIONS**

- 11/1. The Conference received the report.**
- 11/2. The Conference encouraged the Church to use any tools available to help educate youth leaders, children and young people on the lived experience of EDI.**
- 11/3. The Conference urged Circuit Local Preachers' Meetings to consider how they can involve children and young people in the planning and execution of acts of worship.**
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