

## 44. Methodist Children and Youth Assembly Report 2013

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### Introduction

1. 3Generate: Methodist Children and Youth Assembly 2013 took place at the Pioneer Centre in Cleobury Mortimer.
2. The aim of 3Generate is to be a place where children and young people can connect and make friends with others across the Connexion, to have their voices heard in a variety of different ways, to choose who they would like to represent them in the wider Methodist Church and to connect with God in various different forms.

### Membership, attendance and representation

3. The event was attended by 220 children and young people including 60 volunteers and 23 staff members. Twenty eight Districts were represented. There were 43 delegates in the 8–11 age stream (school years 4-6) and 144 delegates in the 11–18 age stream (school years 7-13). Within the 18-23 age stream, there were 21 delegates.
4. The children and young people that attended 3Generate this year recommend that ministers, Local Churches and Circuits enable young people to be involved in 3Generate by letting them know about 3Generate prior to booking, as this makes it possible for them to connect with other likeminded people across the Connexion. Here is some of the feedback from delegates on this matter:

*"Need to open it up to more people!"*

*"3Generate 2013 was amazing, I can't wait for next year! It upsets me that it's not advertised as well as it could be so not many people know about it, I'm sure if more people knew they would love to attend"*

*"Attending 3Generate has made me feel more a part of the Methodist Church... I think it's important for every young Methodist to attend"*

*"[I would like] for the Church to be more aware and interacting with weekends such as 3Generate"*

### Elections

5. In accordance with SO 250(8) and (9), the following elections took place:

<b>Youth President 2014/15</b>	Megan Thomas
<b>Representatives to the Methodist Conference</b>	Jasmine Dempsey, Paul Parker, Joshua Williamson
<b>Representative to the Methodist Council</b>	Andrew Fairlamb
<b>Representatives to the British Youth Council</b>	Rachel Alison, Andrew Harper, Abby Watterson, Tom Williamson
<b>Ecumenical representative</b>	Yambanashe Chisango

## **Planning the event**

6. The sessions in the age streams were in response to consultations with 'Shaper Groups' which consisted of children and youth workers and young people in the local context. They were also in response to questions and issues that came out of 3Generate 2012.
7. 3Generate is more than just an event and *the Big SleepOver* resource enables 8-18 year olds to engage with the event in their local context. It enables them to take an active and participatory role in the life of the Church and to create a link between 3Generate and the Local Church and Circuit. The resource could also be used as a district event and could shape the following 3Generate.
8. The resource equips leaders/workers in running a residential overnight event or day event that will enable children and young people to think, talk and be disciples. The children and young people will be able to relax, have fun and fellowship together as well as having a voice in their local context and wider. This is an opportunity for the Church to really engage with children and young people and respond to their voices.

## **Worship**

9. The theme for the worship at the event was 'Loving God, loving yourself and loving others' based on Matthew 22:36-40. Worship was the integral part of the event; worship, fellowship, bible studies and prayer took place in a variety of different forms ranging from creative to meditative forms in the three age streams. All age worship during the weekend was provided by students from Cliff College.

## **Fun and fellowship**

10. During the weekend there were several opportunities to connect with one another by taking part in activities and also during social time.

## **Having a voice**

11. Having a voice at whatever age is integral to the Christian faith: Jeremiah was still a young man when the spirit of prophecy came upon him. During 3Generate there were many opportunities for young people to have their voices heard. It is hoped that following the event the delegates' opinions can possibly be explored/discussed further in their local setting. One delegate added: "[3Generate] made me realise how our voices are heard."

## **8-11 age stream**

12. Every year as part of the consultation process we try to develop and improve the way the children's voices are heard in an authentic way. This year we created a strategy to capture voices based around using video as a medium. We captured the voices of the children using video and stop animation, using cameras, flip video cameras and electronic tablets. This was a combination of the children recording themselves using the equipment and in a diary room and the facilitators of the sessions recording them or through the creation of stop animation films by the children.

## **Speak out**

13. This session was full of different activities that enabled the children to have their say. It comprised activity stations facilitated by adults; these included: street children and the Street

Child World Cup, exploring Bible stories in creative ways, exploring gifts and skills and vocation, speaking out about faith and Church, what does God mean to you, what is Church and how would you like Church to be.

### **Engage sessions**

14. These sessions were based around outcomes from 2012's 3Generate and had some input from facilitators. Covering subjects such as: 'these are our emotions' (Fishy Music ran this session), 'dealing with conflict and stress' (this session looked at what causes stress and how to manage stress, giving the delegates the tools and skills to cope) and 'valuing who you are' (this was about vocation, gifts and skills).

### **Respond sessions**

15. These were an opportunity for the children to engage and respond to the earlier sessions expressing their thoughts and feelings through the media of art, drama, stop animation and animation.

### **Worship and prayer for the 8-11s**

16. Worship took the format of different styles for the sessions: Messy Church, Messy Prayer and Godly Play. There was also an opportunity to be part of an all age context to worship. To hear the voices and views of 8-11s during their sessions visit the web link:  
<http://childrenandyouth.org.uk/3generate/>

### **11-18 age stream**

17. The sessions at 3Generate, called 'logins', covered a range of issues. Delegates could attend two of the logins. To enable all delegates to understand and comment on what had been discussed in all the logins an interactive voting session took place. The logins were:

- i. **Five ways to change the world**

In this session the delegates discussed what they feel would improve the world and how they would like to do this – as an individual or as a body (eg Church). Following on from their discussion 79% strongly believed that the Church does not do enough to combat stereotypes. The main issues that the delegates thought needed action were: homelessness, the care system/social work/youth clubs, the environment, cuts to services like libraries and swimming pools, the media and self confidence. This login proved that young people are also concerned about the wider society as 62% of delegates thought that the Church does not make information about poverty at home and abroad easily accessible to them.

- ii. **Loving others – Forgiveness**

Within this session the delegates looked into the topic of forgiveness and the references to it in the Bible. Following on from this 93% of the delegates agreed that, even though they are asked to forgive as Christians, they find it hard to do so.

- iii. **Relationships**

There were two logins on the topic of relationships – 'Relationships' for 11-14s and 'The 'F' words: Friends, Family and Faith' for the 15-18s. In the 'Relationships' login, 96% of delegates recommended that the Church develops materials to help families have

healthier and happier relationships and also offers support when these relationships are under pressure. Within 'The 'F' words: Friends, Family and Faith', 95% of delegates expressed that they would like the Church to provide quality teaching on the issue of same sex relationships and also to help people to understand all of the aspects of the debate. Ninety-six percent also articulated that they would like the Church to be helped to develop a realistic view of relationships and family life in 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain. If the relationships between adults and young people break down the delegates would like the Church to develop tools to support them both.

iv. **Understanding mental health**

The passion that young people felt about this topic was prominent following the voting after the sessions. Ninety-nine percent of the delegates wanted the Church to educate them on issues about mental health, focusing on how they impact young people. Ninety-seven percent wanted workers to be educated on mental health issues, so they are able to support young people efficiently, focusing on mental health issues most common amongst young people which are: self harm, depression and eating disorders. In addition to this 96% expressed an interest in wanting to learn more about mental health so they can discern the signs and support others where and when they can. Following on from the session one delegate said "[this login] has helped me know more about mental health and to know that God is always there". **The Assembly recommends that all people employed as children and youth workers should undergo training on mental health issues affecting young people.**

v. **Worship**

The delegates discussed what is meant by the term 'worship' and how it applies to them. Eighty-six percent agreed that all age worship only works for the very young or very old people but it does not specifically work for them as young people. In addition to this 96% believed that the Church should develop resources written by young people especially for young people as an alternative to all age worship and to help establish youth led services/worship across the Connexion.

18. Other topics that delegates were given the opportunity to vote on during this consultation were whether the Youth President should be a member of the Methodist Council. Seventy-seven percent agreed that the Youth President should be on the Methodist Council and support the Methodist Council representatives.
19. The topic of whether 3Generate should be moved to February instead of November was discussed prior to 3Generate, for the children and young people who were not able to attend the event. A survey was conducted and sent out via social media with 75% agreeing that the date should be changed. However, at the event the date change was discussed in the 11-18s stream and 62% did not want the date of 3Generate to change. At the next 3Generate and prior to the event in 2014 more research is going to take place into this issue. This is to ensure that it is as inclusive as possible of the children and young people across the Connexion, rather than just the attendees at 3Generate.
20. During the Saturday there were also practical workshops which were available for the delegates in this age stream. The workshops provided the delegates with the opportunity to learn more about specific issues and skills; these were: First aid, Drama, Sign language, Technical, Exploring the Bible, Planning worship, Prayer.

## **18-23 age stream**

21. The sessions within this stream were facilitated by a young person within that age group. The topics were chosen in consultation with young people.

## **Interfaith relationships**

22. Within this session the delegates discussed the importance of interfaith relationships and how churches should engage more with interfaith work within their local communities. **The Assembly recognises that interfaith work is important and therefore urges the Methodist people to create space for interfaith activities and to engage in interfaith dialogue.**

## **Same sex marriage**

23. In this session it became very clear that the 18-23 year olds care very strongly about this issue and that young people want to be more involved in talking about it. One delegate said that during this session it was "... very useful to hear other people's views as well as voice my own opinion. Discussion like this is important and constructive as well as interesting." Another delegate accentuated that "... it was very useful to see [the same sex marriage debate] from a Church rather than media point of view." The participants thought that there was a lack of understanding of what is happening regarding the current consultation on same sex marriage or even what it means, and would like more accessible statements and updates explaining what the Methodist Church is doing at all levels.

### **The Assembly:**

**Recommends that accessible updates and statements for young people on the issue of same sex marriage be made available;**

**Recommends the involvement of young people in every level of all consultations undertaken by the Church;**

**Felt that the Church's definition of marriage was outdated and requests the Church to either affirm the current definition or update it.**

## **Keeping your faith at university and work**

24. The 18-23 year olds discussed the importance of keeping their faith and remaining 'distinctively Christian' when in a secular environment. The delegates think that moving to university is a stressful transition. The participants recommended that the Church and Community Development Team create an accessible list of ministers around universities to aid in the referral of new students in a reachable way.
25. Other topics that were discussed but not voted on were: Social justice, Meet the 3Generate representatives, Spiritual gifts, Identity, Money and faith.
26. As in the 11-18 stream, the 18-23 year olds also discussed whether the Youth President should be a full voting member at the Methodist Council in addition to the two elected representatives from the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly. The 18-23 age stream believes that the Youth President should be a full voting member of the Methodist Council. This is because the role of the Youth President is an integral part of connexional life and could therefore make an invaluable, informed contribution to discussions at the Council.

## **Comments from the delegates**

27. Some feedback from the delegates on 3Generate:

*"I think 3Generate 2013 was amazing, I can't wait for next year!"*

*"I feel that the weekend has been really great. My first time here and I think I'm going to come back again. I've met loads of new people and, overall, it's been a great experience. I'd recommend it to anyone."*

*"Enjoyed being with other young people who believe in the same thing."*

*"This weekend has been amazing. I learnt new ways to reconnect with God through worship and prayer."*

*"I loved 3Generate!"*

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

**44/1. The Conference received the Report.**

**44/2. The Conference directed that the Youth President should have the right to attend the Methodist Council and amends SO 210(7) as follows:**

The chair of the connexional Audit Committee appointed under Standing Order 213A, the Conference officer for legal and constitutional practice appointed under Standing Order 116C, the secretary of the Faith and Order Committee, ***the Youth President elected under Standing Order 250(10)*** and the members of the senior leadership group as defined in Standing Order 304 not appointed as members of the council under clause (1) above shall have the right to attend and speak at meetings of the council, but shall not be voting members.