

14. 3Generate – The voice of children and young people of the Methodist Church in Britain 2023

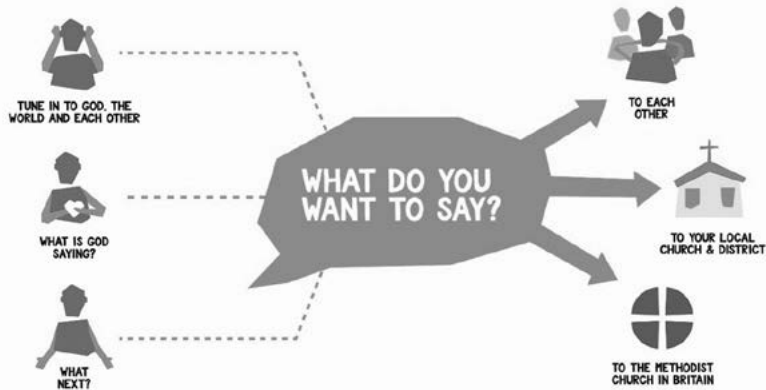
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Introduction

3Generate is a space for children and young people to:

- tune into God, the world, and each other;
- listen to what God is saying to them;
- discern what actions need to be taken for themselves, their Local Church and the Connexion.

This was intentionally designed for children and young people to create impact at both the micro and macro level through their prophetic voice.



While at 3Generate, children and young people were given the opportunity to share their concerns with their local MP through the Town Hall venue. In total 56 letters were sent, and a collective letter was sent to 10 Downing Street. Responses were received to some of the 56 letters sent.

Key Themes

Throughout the 3Generate event, children and young people continually highlighted areas that concerned them, whether that be something that the Church should be changing,

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investing in, or focusing on, or to highlight ways in which they have seen God working in their Local Church.

The questions posed were deliberately worded to make them accessible to children and young people and to encourage them to think about how they can create impact at a local level in their own context. For example, questions were phrased as 'What do you think Methodist churches should...?'

Throughout the event, there was no one clear concern that seemed to stand out above the others. Our children and young people are equally concerned about a range of issues. They highlighted the following key areas of concern: justice, welcome and inclusion, environment, community and fellowship, connecting with God and youth.

Justice

Children and young people are aware of the ever-increasing social injustices that are present within our society in Britain and internationally.

There is a clear trend showing that children and young people want the Methodist Church to invest financially, not only to support those at the social and economic margins, but also to eradicate the cause of their hardship.

Homelessness – children and young people are aware of the issues surrounding homelessness. It was noticeable that children and young people identified that there was an issue with the broad social experience of homelessness: those who are rough sleepers, those who are 'sofa surfers', and those who help people who are deemed as homeless. At 3Generate, it was clear that the consensus was that we should be spending money on supporting those who are rough sleepers who are on the street. Comments were made that the church should be a place of respite, providing food for the homeless (whether that be in the form of food banks/pantries or providing community meals), providing shelter for the homeless in our premises, and providing packages of essentials for those living on our streets. Comments were also made from children and young people that the church should be a place of recovery for the homeless, helping to get their lives back on track, providing practical help, support, love and a friendly welcome.

Food Poverty – food poverty is increasingly noticed by children and young people, not only with regard to the homeless, but also in recognising the effects of the ongoing cost of living crisis on many households. However, little was noted by children and young people about what we should be doing other than spending money on "food".

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The Justice-seeking Church Report came to the Conference in 2023.¹ The church invests money into embedding the principles, priorities and practices for justice at a local level. It is encouraging therefore, for some children and young people to be commenting they have seen God at work through social justice projects in their local context.

The Methodist Church is a proud partner of the movement 'Let's End Poverty', which is supported by many different faith groups, community groups, businesses and organisations. The Methodist Church and Church Action on Poverty both currently provide staff to support the movement, investing deeply in their aim in making ending poverty a primary issue at the next general election. The concerns of children and young people in relation to justice and making poverty a thing of the past, are reflected in the ongoing work of the Church.

Welcome and Inclusion

The Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity states that 'The Methodist Church aims:

- to celebrate the rich diversity of people within the Methodist Church;
- to eradicate all discrimination, to treat all people justly and with dignity across the breadth of the Methodist Church;
- for a profound change in the culture, practices and attitudes of the Methodist Church so that all Methodists are able to be full participants in the Church's life'.²

It is clear that there is the strong belief at 3Generate that church should be a welcoming space and inclusive to all, supporting the principles of the strategy.

Hospitality – children and young people believe that Methodist churches should focus on being places of welcome and hospitality for all. It is clearly important for attendees at 3Generate that all are welcomed as equal, and it is important that everyone has a voice and is allowed to flourish in the life of the church at all levels. Children and young people recognise that hospitality can come in many forms, for example, physical welcome, the atmosphere of a community, and sharing of food. Critically, this hospitality must be non-judgemental and welcoming to all.

Physical Accessibility – The physical accessibility of our premises is becoming increasingly important, and we should be focusing on that as a priority. This not only

1 https://d1yuutt686hfi0.cloudfront.net/media/documents/conf-23-pc-12-walking-with-micah-project_MUPIJz3.pdf
2 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/the-inclusive-methodist-church/strategy-for-justice-dignity-and-solidarity/>

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allows people full access to worship, but says a lot about the culture of inclusivity in our Church. The Connexional Team has been investing time and resources to create a culture where accessibility is prioritised and work is encouraged at a local level. It is therefore encouraging to see that there will be JDS Programme Coordinator in post, from the next connexional year, to help to embed these core practices into the culture of the Connexion. The work of the Connexional Team has seen the development of resources to help Local Churches to make Methodist premises physically accessible,³ notably the Methodist Church Access Audit. However, there is no connexional requirement (other than laid out in the Equality Act 2010) to assess where potential improvements could be made to the physical accessibility on all Methodist premises.

Same-Sex Marriage – there is a lack of understanding amongst some children and young people about the position of the Methodist Church on same-sex marriage. Some believe that the Methodist Church should **begin** to allow same-sex marriage on Methodist premises, whereas the church already does allow this. Resolution 59/8 of the 2021 Conference affirmed that ‘The Conference consents in principle to the marriage of same-sex couples on Methodist premises...’⁴ which is set out in Standing Orders O11A and O11B. The cause of confusion for children and young people may stem from Standing Order O11B, where the managing trustees of Methodist premises may have not approved the premises for same-sex marriage, or a minister, probationer, officer or member feels it is contrary to their conscience. It is therefore vital that we engage in conversation with our children and young people about the conviction of the Methodist Church, both at the macro and micro level.

Environment

Our children and young people believe that the Methodist Church should be making changes to become more sustainable, leading to a “healthier environment” and a “greener environment”. A collective letter was sent to 10 Downing Street from children and young people, outlining their concerns about the environment. A response was obtained from 10 Downing Street, which can be seen in Appendix 1.

Eco Church – The majority of comments made by children and young people, with regard to the environment, came under the section where they were asked what they wanted Methodist churches to make changes to. At a local level, there is a clear desire to change the perception of continual talk but no action. Children and young people are increasingly aware of the work of Eco Church and Eco-Congregation Scotland.

3 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/making-buildings-accessible/>

4 https://d1yuutt686hfi0.cloudfront.net/media/documents/conf-2021-59-marriage-and-relationships-provisional-resolutions-updated_WqJ63Qf.pdf

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Action for Hope - Children and young people recognise that some of the more ambitious tasks to create a healthier environment require financial support. They are keen for the implementation of renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar energy. The 2021 Methodist Conference agreed an aspirational target to become a net zero Church by 2030 (under resolution 3/3, responding to Memorial M6),⁵ leading to the Action for Hope project.⁶ It is therefore encouraging that there is work in progress in the church to allow financial support in the form of grants across Districts, to support Districts, Circuits and the Local Church. It is heartening to see the thoughts and beliefs of children and young people being implemented into the wider work of the church regarding environmental sustainability.

Community and Fellowship

At 3Generate, it was highlighted that one of the ways that children and young people see God at work in their local context is through the community and fellowship that being part of the life of the church brings. This fellowship can be found through attending different organisations and areas of the church, such as youth groups, joining in worship (either the traditional form, or through New Places for New People/Church at the Margins), uniformed organisations, social justice projects, with each offering something different to the lives of our children and young people.

Uniformed Organisations – a number of children and young people said that their favourite thing about their local Methodist church is the uniformed organisation they attend, such as Girls' Brigade or Boys' Brigade. There was recognition from children and young people that this is also a space where they can come to know God. However, young people may not have the ability to attend such an organisation due to lack of groups in their local context. It is encouraging to see that the Children, Youth and Family Team are engaging in conversation with uniformed organisations. The Local Church can provide a haven for uniformed organisations to flourish and thrive, creating community and fellowship for children and young people who otherwise may be unaffiliated to the Church.

Connecting with God

Worship – when discussing what their favourite thing about their Local Church is, many children and young people simply said "I love God". There is a strong sense of

5 https://d1yuutt686hf0.cloudfront.net/media/documents/conf-2021-3-methodist-council-part-1_33juHd9.pdf

6 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/action/climate/action-for-hope/>

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biblical engagement from children and young people, and an appreciation for varying music styles in worship. They have a desire to have varied styles of worship with more conversational services and services that include games and activities, rather than solely “a long sermon”, to “help people discuss the scripture in greater detail”.

Communal Connection – children and young people clearly have a desire for a closer connection with God, through a passion for worship. Intergenerational worship (where generations interact and worship with each other), as opposed to multigenerational worship (where different generations worship in the same service) is important for young people, as we are united in the body of Christ. There is also a desire to expand our connection with God out into the communities that we serve. Our children and young people see the values of our evangelical Wesleyan roots, in reaching out to our communities where they are, and proclaiming the love of God to them.

Youth

Youth events are increasingly recognised by children and young people as their favourite part of church, being spaces where they have most seen God at work. There is a call for further financial investment in those activities and gatherings, such as 3Generate. It is interesting to note that they did not call for money to be invested in youth generally, but in youth activities and gatherings specifically. Children and young people acknowledge (and rightfully so) that they are the church now as well as the church of the future, so they feel it is right to invest in them through these activities and gatherings.

Youth Gatherings – 3Generate is overwhelmingly appreciated by participants, as children and young people continually want to see “more 3Gen”, and there is a clear acknowledgement from them that it “sows the seeds” of their faith and discipleship. Discussions over the course of 3Generate show that there is a real desire for more localised and frequent gatherings where children and young people can meet, share in fun and fellowship, discuss issues that are important to them and have a voice. Children and young people have been passionate about this for several years, but they do recognise that this has financial implications for the differing levels of the church. Not only this, but they recognise that attending 3Generate itself requires a great level of resource, planning and commitment. Under Standing Order 250(6), Districts are required to take ‘appropriate steps...to ensure that children and young people connected with the life of the Methodist Church within that District attend the Assembly’. Work is underway to find a fair and equitable approach to aid all children and young people within the life of the Methodist Church to attend 3Generate.

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Youth Representation

In accordance with clauses (10), (11) and (12) of Standing Order 250, 3Generate is required each year to elect to the Youth President, and Youth Representatives both to the Methodist Council and the Methodist Conference. However, due to wider constitutional changes to the Methodist Church in Britain (as agreed at the 2023 Conference), no Youth Representatives were elected to the Methodist Council at 3Generate 2023. This was to comply with resolution 57/3 of the 2023 Conference regarding the establishment of the new Connexional Council on 1 September 2024.

Our youth representation is:

Youth President 2024 – 2025	Bea Hulme
Methodist Conference Representative	Owen Wilkins
Agents of Change Representatives	Ailish Dooley Alex Day Daniel Onyett Gracie Silk Hugo Hildred Jamie Nyirenda-Scott Reuben Peterson
Digital Representatives	Amos Rand Dominic Bevan Joseph Zaccaria
Global Church Representatives	Bea Beard Hope Wild

These new representatives will join with those continuing to serve as youth reps: Eleanor Dixon (Methodist Council Representative until August 2024), Matt Hays (Methodist Council Representative until August 2024), Luca Barwick-Plant (Global Church Representative)

The Assembly gives its thanks to Verity Wild (Methodist Council Representative), Afon Harland (Agents of Change Representative), Elisha Atif (Global Church Representative), Iraj Irfan (Methodist Conference Representative) and Erin Campbell (Methodist Conference Representative) who have stepped down as Youth Representatives in 2023.

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***RESOLUTIONS

- 14/1. The Conference receives the Report.
- 14/2. The Conference acknowledges the high importance of the Methodist accessibility audit and urges all managing trustees of Methodist premises to undertake a biennial accessibility audit, and implement changes accordingly.
- 14/3. The Conference encourages Local Churches to celebrate, support or establish uniformed organisations in their locality.
- 14/4. The Conference recommends that all churches develop strategic plans in which they can engage and connect with children and young people in their localities, releasing funding to enable these plans as appropriate.
- 14/5. The Conference urges all Districts to allocate money within existing budgets by September 2025, for which Local Churches, Circuits or the District can apply for youth events.

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Appendix 1



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA
www.gov.uk/Number10

From the Direct Communications Unit

26 October 2023

The Children
3Generate
The Methodist Church
Methodist Church House
25 Tavistock Place
London
WC1H 9SF

Dear Children

I am writing on behalf of the Prime Minister to thank you for your correspondence about the important matter of climate change.

It is really encouraging to see young people like yourself thinking hard about the future of our planet, the impact of climate change and the actions the UK Government is taking to tackle it. I agree climate change is an important issue. That is why the Government is determined to confront it and leave our natural environment in a better condition than we found it.

In November 2021, the UK hosted the crucial COP26 Climate Summit in Glasgow. It was at this Summit where the historic Glasgow Climate Pact was agreed by almost 200 countries. At the recent climate change conference COP27, which took place in Egypt last November, the Government wanted to build on the commitments made at COP26 last year. This included keeping global warming to a minimum and protecting the most vulnerable communities and species around our world from the worst impacts of climate change.

The Government welcome the progress made at COP27, but recognises that there is more work to do. The UK will continue to work tirelessly with countries and parties around the world to ensure momentum on climate action is not lost. At home our net zero target means that from 2050, the UK will stop contributing to climate change. I am also pleased to tell you that between 1990 and 2021 we have reduced our emissions by 48%.

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/cabinet-office/about/personal-information-charter>

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Many people from all over the UK are already doing their bit on climate change, from the engineers working on the offshore wind farms now helping to power our homes and businesses, to local initiatives encouraging children and parents to walk to school. Thank you for doing your bit and raising awareness of climate change.

Thank you, once again, for writing to the Prime Minister on this important issue.

Yours sincerely



Correspondence Officer

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Appendix 1a



10 DOWNING STREET
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www.gov.uk/Number10

From the Direct Communications Unit

26 October 2023

Mr Tom Hart
3Generate
The Methodist Church
Methodist Church House
25 Tavistock Place
London
WC1H 9SF

Dear Mr Hart

I am writing on behalf of the Prime Minister to thank you for your letter of 25 October 2023, in which you enclosed letters from the children at 3Generate.

Please find enclosed a reply for the children, sent with our very best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Correspondence Officer

To learn about how the Prime Minister's Office uses your personal data, please visit:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/cabinet-office/about/personal-information-charter>