

“Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”

1 Timothy 4:12 (NRSV)

In this special edition of *World Church News*, our focus is on young people. We will give you a sample of what youth work looks like in some of our Partner Churches around the world, and show you how young Methodists are contributing to the life of the Church.

Youth are the ‘present’ of the Church

“Youth are not just the future of the Church, but also the ‘present’ of the Church – and that ‘present’ is now.”

This was the message participants at the Diocese of Raiwind’s National Youth Conference had for their leaders and themselves. The Conference, held in Lahore in April, brought together 167 people from all 8 dioceses of the Church in Pakistan, and other denominations. It was a unique opportunity for young people from different parts of the country to meet, with different perspectives, issues and experiences, to address questions surrounding issues young people face in Pakistan. This included the social, political and economic factors causing discrimination towards minorities, the role youth can play in promoting harmony and peace, and the role social media plays in promoting peace in the country.

“We want to take our good experiences and ideas to other dioceses of the Church of Pakistan, as young people want to learn the Bible so that they can practice it in their daily lives – especially while living in a context that is non-Christian and rife with violence in the name of religion,” said Raheel Sharoon, the Diocese of Raiwind’s Development Officer. “Moreover, we would like to build a school for technical education, for



Delegates at the Youth Conference give a dance performance

young people who are school or college dropouts.”

Some of the resolutions conference attendees made stressed the need for youth-based activities centred towards learning and skill development. They also emphasised the need to foster a spirit of reconciliation and joyful co-existence, to challenge the prevalent negativity and violent extremism in their society, and for the Church’s leadership to support, encourage and empower young people. Reaffirming that young people (aged 14-35) are the biggest component of the Pakistani and Church population, they noted the efforts made in the past to focus on youth issues within the Church, but said that more needs to be done.

Living courageously

by Syntiche Dedji



Participants at CIEMAL's Youth Assembly



Evangelising!

The phrase “WWJD?” (“What would Jesus do?”) swept across the UK and the USA in the 1990s. Instead of just asking themselves that question, the young people I met in Panama at the CIEMAL (Council of Latin American and Caribbean Evangelical Methodist Churches) youth assembly are living it out.

Confident, bold, passionate and immersed in being living representations of the gospel, the 20 young representatives from Methodist Churches around Latin America were truly inspirational. Ranging in age from 17 to 30, they included high school students, accountants, working professionals and people in full-time ministry. While this may be enough to exempt young people in the UK from attending church, those I met in Panama saw it as more reason to be active in their churches and to ‘give back’ to their communities.

The theme of the conference was “How to be a living Church in a context of death” – referring predominantly to violence, but also to the death of dreams and opportunities, the decline of the Methodist Church, and socio-political difficulties. People spoke about the struggles they face in their own countries, such as violence against women (Brazil), drug addiction and drug-related crimes (Paraguay), racism against indigenous people (Argentina), immigration, refugees and prisons (Mexico), corruption (Guatemala), education (Bolivia) and gang violence (El Salvador).

I was especially moved by the stories from the El Salvadorians, coming from a country with one of the highest murder rates in Latin America, despite the fact that 80% of the population professes to be Christian. They told us of instances where people were not

able to cross the road to attend an event being organised by the church on the other side, because a certain gang was in charge of that area. It was moving to hear them say, “Our young people are dying; they’re being murdered.”

However, instead of hiding in fear, the young El Salvadorians continue to share the gospel boldly. Evangelism forms a large part of not only their work, but that of all the churches represented at the youth assembly. Seeing young people my age with such deep convictions and dedication to their faith, boldly living for Jesus, really challenged me to think about how I contribute to my community, share my faith and manage my time.

I know what Jesus would do. Now it’s time for me to be courageous and do it!

Youth ministry flourishes in Uganda



Some of the young people with Sunday school children during a service



A youth praise and worship team

With the help of the World Mission Fund and the Nationals in Mission Appointments scheme, the Methodist Church Uganda (MCU) has been able to recruit GRACE AYAA to be its Youth Ministry Coordinator. Here, Grace shares some highlights of MCU's youth work.

Young people make up about 70% of MCU's congregation. Their aim is to grow spiritually, socially and economically so that they can sustain the Church and help expand its ministry.

The Church has given youths the opportunity to minister as service leaders, participate in the worship team and evangelise in the nearby communities. Some of our young people have had training in mission and ministry from Cliff College; others have had opportunities to attend theological school. The MCU also has plans for young people in the

area of economic empowerment through vocational training and entrepreneurship skills, so that they can sustain themselves and support the work of the Church financially.

Young people have been a big help in junior Sunday school, where some of them are teachers. They have used community games and sports as a means of evangelism, and the number of young people who are passionate about the gospel has increased as a result. They have also formed fellowship groups: a senior youth group (mainly college students

and working youths) and a teen fellowship group. These groups go on retreats and have come up



Grace Ayaa, MCU's Youth Ministry Coordinator

with several initiatives to attract those outside the Church to join them.



Betty Nairuba, MCU's Operations Manager (centre), encouraging young people during a send-off for those going back to school



Girls pose for a photo during leadership training by a team from Cliff College



The team with the youth group from the Methodist Church in Petit-Goâve

An encounter in Haiti

The ONE Encounter programme gives young people opportunities to encounter a different part of the world, a different way of life, or some other experience to open and broaden their minds. LOUISE WESTOBY is one of a group of young British Methodists who went to Haiti in July this year on a trip organised by the ONE Encounter programme in partnership with the World Church Relationships Team.

We visited youth groups in several churches, taking part and leading workshops with each group. Together we explored life as a young Christian in Haiti and Britain, and the broader challenges our churches face.

In the UK, it can be easy to go through your week without giving your faith much thought, saving it for church on Sunday. However, for these young Haitians, faith seemed to be weaved into all aspects of their lives – even affecting how they dress, their social groups and the music they listen to. Faith was integral for them and they seemed very keen to be actively involved in church life. This is great news for the Church in Haiti, in which the average age of attendees is relatively young. If you are over 35, you are considered an older member of the congregation –

a far cry from the situation in Britain!

Many young people we spoke to are already putting themselves forward for positions of responsibility in the Church: leading worship, helping in children's activities, reading Scripture and even teaching. However, conversations with them revealed that even though they

were in these roles, they still were unable to influence much change within the Church. Their voices were not being heard and there was far more that could be done to equip them better for the jobs they did.

As a group, we came away from this trip massively inspired and encouraged, having seen the strength of faith and enthusiasm these young Haitians had. We were challenged to look at the ways we and other young people serve in our own churches, and to do this with the same joy and enthusiasm we saw. Bigger than this, though, we saw a challenge to the wider Church: to look at ways that we can value the young people in our congregations and support them in the roles they are called to. These young people will go on to shape the Church of tomorrow. The journey has already started; what can we do to help?



Sharing experiences of living as a Christian in Britain and Haiti



Young people from the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe took to the streets in their hundreds last year for a mass clean-up. This was their way of calling on government leaders to clean up politics, the economy, healthcare, their communities and the country as a whole.

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PRAYER



We pray for young people in all our Partner Churches around the world. We give thanks that they are striving to be an example in their communities, through their speech, conduct and love. We ask, Lord, that you may help them be resilient in the face of the difficulties that come their way. We especially remember the young people of Zimbabwe; please guide them during this time of political transition. Amen.