



# The Methodist Church

## Children, Youth and Family

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### **Methodist Recorder article by Michael Pryke, Youth Council Rep**

#### **Standing Orders aren't just for those over 50**

By my own admission I am what you might describe as a Methodist geek. My love of all things Wesley and for the bizarreness of all things Methodism knows no bounds, including love of the book we obviously all hold most dear CPD (Methodist Constitutional Practice and Discipline). I can wax lyrical about the inner workings of the Methodist Church and about things that other people might describe as 'dull' and many might find this surprising considering that I'm 20 years old, perhaps that is what first drew me towards the Methodist Council.

Now you might be wondering what could possibly attract a 20-year-old to Methodist Council? Well, for me, it's being able to attend meetings and challenge people with the views and opinions of the young people of the Methodist Church.

At 3Generate (the children and youth assembly of the Methodist Church) in 2019 I had the pleasure of working 'on the wall' – this not being a reference to Game of Thrones of course! The wall was where children and young people could bring topics and ideas that they wanted the Church to listen to or take action on and where young people could vote on which of these topics was most important for them. For me this was the voices of young people playing out right in front of my eyes and, as always, they surprised me with their range of ideas and actions.

This is really where we as Council Reps step in. Once those voices have been heard it's our job to take them to the wider Methodist Church, and for us that manifests itself in the Methodist Council. We take the children and young people's voices and talk about property or the budget or any other matters that come across our desks.

#### **We don't all speak in one voice**

In my experience of being a Rep, the voice of children and young people has never been just one voice. It's thousands of voices in thousands of churches all talking at once, and it's a glorious symphony of noise. Children and young people are passionate about so many issues, from climate change to refugees to having

McDonald's (other fast food restaurants are available) after church. We don't all speak in the same voice.

I've also found that children and young people don't conform to the stereotypes usually placed upon them in a church context. For example, while manning the wall at 3Gen, one idea suggested was 'more modern music in church' – an idea regularly associated with young people. Perhaps it would therefore be surprising to know that this idea wasn't very favourable at 3Gen, receiving a considerable number of negative reactions. This has been the case with many ideas that people perceive to be 'young people's ideas' so perhaps if you take anything from this particular article is this.

Listen to children and young people and don't presume. For if we presume we know and understand children and young people then surely we will drive them out of the church in droves. It's a difficult task, listening, but as a Methodist Council Rep it's the thing I've learnt to enjoy most, just sitting back and listening to children and young people design and mould their Church.