

### **Methodist Recorder article by James Jenkins, Ecumenical Youth Rep**

Hello, I am James Jenkins, the Ecumenical Representative from 3Generate, the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly.

My role involves attending many events. Recently, these have included the URC Youth Assembly, the Methodist Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Conference, the Northampton District youth event and a visit to the Quakers for a long weekend.

#### **URC YOUTH ASSEMBLY**

I arrived at the event in Tamworth a little late but, on the plus side, I had a lovely taxi driver who was very chatty and told me all about the local history of the area. We drove to the White Moor Lakes, where I had attended my first ever 3Generate seven years ago. A URC thermal mug was a great gift to receive and helped us to keep down the number of paper cups that were being used.

Our first event, the evening worship session, was very different to 3Generate, here we discussed the business side of things so that all the young people could get their voices heard. They also had many different forms of worship that I really enjoyed, such as a biblical quiz. Various workshops were held relating to the theme of “One Body” where all the parts of the Church worked together. We discussed issues relevant for our age groups in small groups, where they put me in the nearest Synod to my home, Wessex.

At “Messy Church” we took part in activities, along the “One Body” theme, that were easy for young children. We explored how, as one body in Christ, we all have a part to play in issues around the environment, social justice and creating an inclusive church. Speakers from A Rocha UK, who run the Eco Church scheme, and the Joint Public Issues Team highlighted the challenges we face and how we can be part of the solution.

The themes were unpacked through a variety of workshops including craft, Bible study, drama, prayer and outside activities. Messy Assembly was an hour of fun activities with thought-provoking conversations.

The Youth Assembly business included resolutions to encourage churches to give children and young people a meaningful voice in their local church meetings, helping churches to install WiFi, and set up a task group to research ways of tackling loneliness among young people.

## **EQUALITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI) CONFERENCE**

At the EDI Conference held in Oxford, we were given many questions to think about.

What is God's design in bringing together preachers from such diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds within the Methodist Church in Britain? What might prevent people from diverse backgrounds exercising leadership through engagement within committees and governance structures? What can be learned about inclusion and participation from examples of good practice in the life of the Church such as 3Generate?

We decided the answer to God's design was to foster a greater understanding of each other. Whatever background we come from, we all need similar things - love, somewhere to call home and nurture. We may approach these differently but essentially, we are the same.

Regarding the barriers to leadership, these can be around experience, the language used and a lack of encouragement to develop knowledge and skills

While there are many examples of good practice, I would hope to see more individual mentorship and support to enable participation.

## **VISIT TO THE QUAKERS**

Easter brought a visit to the Quakers, where we examined the concept of privilege. This led us to look at our own privilege and how it varies depending on aspects of our identity.

As well as themed sessions, we had a multitude of fun, social events. On Friday night a quiz helped break the ice and allowed us to get to know each other, throughout the weekend small groups helped foster community and inclusivity.

The Easter Egg Extravaganza was an activity for everyone, be they competitive, sporty, or shy. You could do archery, kayaking or the king swing as well as watch the film "Freedom Writers".

So many people signed up for the Open Mic that later in the day we had Open Mic 2.0. Dressing up drama brought much hilarity, allowing us to reinvent classic fairy tales with a spin on different aspects of privilege.

I feel I now have a greater insight into how we all share faith in our different denominations, and I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience.