

## 29. 3Generate 2020 – Methodist Children and Youth Assembly

<b>Contact name and details</b>	Ms Phoebe Parkin, Youth President youthpresident@methodistchurch.org.uk
<b>Resolutions</b>	<p>29/1 The Conference receives the report.</p> <p>29/2. The Conference commends the work undertaken to launch 3Generate365 and directs District Policy Committees to ensure they have an Ambassador appointed for their District.</p> <p>29/3. The Conference laments the stresses and traumas experienced by many under-23s living through the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore directs circuit staff teams to review how pastoral care might be more intentionally and actively offered to children and young people.</p> <p>29/4. The Conference reaffirms the importance of hearing the voices of children and young people in discerning future direction and directs the Council and connexional committees, when revising strategic policies, to ensure that there is consultation with under 12s, under-18s and under-23s as well as with other groups.</p>

### Introduction

1. 3Generate is the Children and Youth Assembly of the Methodist Church. In previous years, young people from all across the Connexion have gathered to share fellowship and to engage with and speak out prophetically on issues important to them. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent “lockdowns” meant that a physical gathering was not possible and this had a significant impact on all ministry with children and young people throughout the Methodist Church.

### 3Generate365

2. The absence of a physical 3Generate gathering catalysed the launch of 3Generate365. 3Generate365 is a year-round process of engagement with children and young people in their local setting to enable them to listen to God, discern what God is saying, deepen their faith and be confident in being evangelists sharing their faith with others. 3Generate365 aims to create

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continuous dialogue and action between children and young people and the Church in a local, circuit, district and connexional context.

3. The theme of 3Generate365 this year is “Tune In”. This focuses on children and young people tuning in to God, listening to what God might be saying and sharing that with others. Two national “Tune Ins” were hosted, one of which was a live broadcast on YouTube and the second was a Zoom meeting with over 80 children and young people. Children and young people were able to come together online, have fellowship together, share ideas and spend time with God. Subsequently Districts, Circuits and churches are holding local Tune Ins to hear and discern what God is calling children and young people to respond to and take action on, creating dialogue and action as individuals, in peer contexts and intergenerationally.
4. At the 2020 Conference, the appointment of District Ambassadors was recommended (Resolution 53/11 DR 6/14/1). District Ambassadors are volunteers who act as advocates for and coordinate the work of 3Generate365 in their District. At the time of writing, there are 19 District Ambassadors in 17 Districts, creating a network of teams who support and work alongside each other. District Ambassadors work alongside and are supported by Connexional Team staff to achieve the aims of 3Generate 365<sup>1</sup>.
5. The 3Generate365 Toolbox has been created, which has many resources to help local leaders. It includes resources which explore the experience of children and young people throughout the pandemic and lockdown.
6. As part of 3Generate365, Fridays@5:17 was launched in January 2021 as another way to help children and young people tune in to God. Inspired by 1 Thessalonians 5:17, which reads “never stop praying”, this is a time for children and young people across the Connexion to stop, pray and listen to God. The Youth President and the Youth Reps provide prayers each week to inspire and guide children and young people in their prayer time.
7. The 3Generate App relaunched in October. The App is interactive and features Bible studies, videos, prayers, news and more. It is free to download from Apple and Android stores and allows communication to go directly into the hands of children and young people. At the time of writing, the app has been downloaded more than 500 times.

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1 A document summarising 3Generate365 is available on request from 3Generate@methodistchurch.org.uk

### The work of the Youth President and Youth Representatives

8. The Youth President and Youth Representatives have adapted their roles in order to continue their engagement with children and young people. Their work has all been done virtually and includes attending conferences, undertaking media interviews, social media engagement, engaging with church policy and the Methodist Council, producing material for the app, writing articles and blogs, and attending virtual visits. The Youth President and Youth Representatives have visited over 50 youth groups, across 20 Districts, chatting and sharing ideas with children and young people. In addition, at the time of writing, the Youth President Instagram account has over 600 followers, over 800 impressions in a week and posts reaching over 300 accounts. Meanwhile, the Youth Representatives Instagram account has over 350 followers, with impressions and reach of over 200. The Youth President and Connexional Team staff have produced a resource entitled “God’s World, Our Home” for children and young people and their groups to use, which explores responding to the climate crisis spiritually, theologically and practically.

### 3Generate Elections 2020

9. In 2021 voting was done virtually, as there was no physical 3Generate gathering. The results of the elections were as follows.

Role	Name
Youth President 2021-22	Daud Irfan
Youth Representatives – Conference	Rachel Barwise Roxanne Bromley Matthew Hays
Youth Representatives – Council	Verity Wild
Youth Representatives – Ecumenical	Isabel Barlow Martha Rand
Youth Representatives – Global	Liddy Buswell Meg Haslam
Youth Representatives – Social Justice	Rachael Lowe Emily Roe

10. These representatives will join Ben Andrews, Isaac Boateng-Nketiah, James Carver, Charlotte Hambly, James Jenkins and Michael Pryke as the Youth Representatives team. They will serve as the Youth President’s Advisory Group, under Standing Order 250(9).

### Key concerns and areas of interest

11. Key themes that have arisen in conversation with youth groups, via interaction on social media, and through the national Tune Ins, have been:
  - **Zoom and other video conferencing software have changed ministry with children and young people.** Children and young people were pleased to be able to gather on Zoom but are very keen to meet physically. Many children and young people were tired of Zoom, and there has been increased levels of Zoom fatigue/anxiety as lockdowns have continued. Digital poverty was also apparent when visiting some groups, with households sharing one device or having limited access to the internet. There are also groups who no longer gather online but their leader keeps in contact with them through phone calls, socially-distanced visits and by sending activity/wellbeing packs.
  - **The pandemic has caused emotional and mental stress and trauma.** Older children and young people are particularly stressed and worried about school, especially about exams, university and job prospects. Younger children are struggling with maintaining and building relationships. Many children and young people are aware of the wider grief, loss and stress the pandemic is causing. In addition, children and young people have missed out on many seemingly insignificant and yet very formative moments and experiences, including rites of passage, dating and relationships, and opportunities to gain independence outside the home. There are mixed experiences of how the pandemic influenced children and young people's faith, with some feeling more connected to God whilst others have had their relationship with God challenged.
  - **The favourite aspects of church for children and young people were the people and music.** Many children and young people enjoyed the social aspect of church, with many seeing fellow attendees of their church as friends and family. Many also liked contributing to the music in their church, favouring a mixture of traditional and modern music. Children and young people were grateful that they could continue meeting online but were extremely keen to return to physical gathering.
  - **Children and young people benefit from both large events like 3Generate and good local youth work.** Many of the groups had really enjoyed going to 3Generate and expressed that the event had a profound impact on their faith. However, many groups also expressed that their youth workers and groups were important for their faith development. In particular, children and young people felt it was important that they could ask questions of, be guided by

and be themselves around their youth leaders and ministers. However, this may not be the whole picture, as those children and young people who had a poorer relationship with their church or youth group may have not continued attending virtually, and therefore would not have had the chance to interact with the Youth President or Youth Representatives and have their voices incorporated into this report.

- **Children and young people showed enthusiasm for participating in and contributing to the work of their church.** Although they were keen to be active in their church, many felt that they could not be due to limitations set by their Local Church or for fear that their gift and skills were not needed. Many children and young people also spoke about the importance of making church a comfortable, safe, and inviting place to be. Many wanted to extend the positive experience of church they had to others and wanted to break the stereotype that churches were exclusive. Ideas of ways to make church feel more accessible include forest church, beach church, adventure church and beanbag church.
- **Children and young people think the Church should be prioritising:**
  - Responding to the climate crisis
  - Caring for each other's mental health
  - Being inclusive, kind and welcoming to all
  - Ending poverty, in particular homelessness and food poverty
  - Sharing the love of Jesus with others

Children and young people showed a desire to be included in and made aware of this work and in all work that is integral to the fabric of the Church because they believe they are that fabric, as much as people older than themselves. Many commented on the lack of dialogue about these issues from the pulpit and thought it was important that these issues were spoken about in services and other acts of worship and in conversations with the wider congregation.

### 12. Reflections from children and young people

“Lockdown has taught me a lot about myself, and I emerge new and hopeful.

Lockdown gave me time, and even when I didn't use that time how I would have liked, I had to be gentle with myself. I have taken the time to confront past difficulties and explore my faith in a way that I had never done before.

Yes, there were constraints, and there was no doubt that I was missing seeing people, socialising, but technology really helped me in that sense. Zoom, FaceTime, Microsoft Teams..... there were times where being at home all the time, stuck to a screen, lacking motivation and energy was a real struggle and I know I am not alone in that. Lockdown may have been for many of us out of our “comfort zone”, especially for me. Someone who enjoys speaking to people and going outside and now feels anxious when thinking of going out into society. It may take time to overcome but there is one thing that I know for certain and has been prevalent throughout this whole time... God is with me.

Lockdown has allowed me to network and connect with people across Birmingham, England, the world! My mission to help young people explore their faith and create a supportive safe space for them has far from stopped in my circuit. I have seen relationships build and develop, communities form and people connecting despite not being physically together. I had ventured into a time like no other, a time where I am limited and restricted, physically, mentally and emotionally. Lockdown has given me time to think, to question, to learn about myself. To explore things that I had never done, like learning and overcoming personal hurdles to producing online worship on YouTube and reaching people from all over.

Like Jesus was raised from the dead in his same body but different, I am coming out of lockdown the same, but different. I have emerged, new and hopeful. Lockdown is only the beginning for me.”

*Imogen, 19, Birmingham District*

“Although 2020 was a difficult year at times, it was very different for us on the Isle of Man. Even though we spent 3 months in lockdown, by late June we were ‘covid free’ and were free from distancing and wearing masks, the only difference being that we were unable to leave the island to travel.

This doesn’t mean that it was easy though as I, along with many others, really struggled with my anxiety. I was having panic attacks more often and didn’t seem to have any real way of coping with them. In lockdown it was hard as those people I had relied on to help me were now not around anymore and as I have always been conscious of talking to my parents about what I was struggling with, it really felt like I was all on my own, all my worry and anxiety trapped inside my little room. It was really hard to have everyone I knew praying for me, and not being able to see any clear change in it, because if anything it seemed to get worse, which is something I still struggle with today.

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However, in lockdown I really was able to find God's beauty all around me as I went on long walks with my dog, Sizzles, every day. It was a way of getting away from it all, my family, schoolwork, the stress of life in lockdown and I am extremely lucky to live in such a beautiful place, where we are surrounded by such beautiful scenery and those walks were a real help in clearing my head and became a real love of mine. Speaking of Sizzles, he was something good that came out of lockdown. He is a wire-haired sausage dog from Cannoch who came over all on his own, where mum and dad surprised us with him. He was an excuse to always be out on walks and also he really boosted our mood in those tough times.

On the Island we have had 3 lockdowns at this point, but roughly 60% of our population have had their first vaccination with many coming up for their second dose. I think covid-19 will always be looming over our heads, but I think if we trust in God, I know anything can happen. Deuteronomy 31:6 :)"

*Kitty, 16, Isle of Man*

"Lockdown was quite hard for me because I wasn't able to see my friends and go out like I used to. Sitting at home and doing work online was much harder than just going to school because you were most likely to get distracted and play games or not do the work at all. It was the same with church. Having to set it up on YouTube and call my grandma to watch it on FaceTime was all a bit of a struggle and I would rather be at church sitting down and listening to all the hymns being sung.

But there are also good things that came out of lockdown. People have learned to bond more and spend more time with each other and I feel like we all appreciate the NHS even more after helping us get through coronavirus. I have definitely been calling my family more than I had been before.

I have started to like a couple things during lockdown. Photography was one of them. I enjoyed going in the garden and taking photos of nature and of course myself. I also have started to like basketball, so much that my mum is going to get me on a team. I've also carried on dance during lockdown via zoom. And I think that Zoom has been everyone's first option because it's really helpful.

So, I think God is trying to teach us a lesson, we should appreciate each other more and really understand just how much our loved ones mean to us."

*Zarah, 11, London District*

"I found that lockdown made me feel many different emotions such as: sad, happy, bewildered, and it made me think about my life. At the start it was very

hard for me because I am a very active boy and have lots of energy, and it is very hard for me to stay in one place. It was very weird how everything changed in a matter of days.

Working from home was difficult because I find I work better in a classroom situation, mainly because you are made to do the work by the teachers. But because I was home, I was more lazy and more tempted to play games however, my mum was so strict I kept up with my work and got good grades.

I used the lovely sun to keep fit because I wanted to stay in form for football. We often went to the park after we did our work and used to race down the hill. I think why so many children found it hard is because we couldn't socialise and be with our friends. We are built to be around people, it's-in our DNA but we to adapted to the new strange way of life.

I was lucky enough to get to travel to Germany to see some of my family. I felt very privileged as it was very hard not seeing them for so long because I'm very close to my family. It was also hard not seeing my grandma because she is my main support and I missed her very much. But luckily I was allowed to see her at Christmas.

The end of lockdown made me reflect on how we can take life for granted and taught me that we should live life to the fullest. It allowed me to spend even more time with my family as we weren't able to do anything but we made the best of it."

*Joel, 13, London District*

"For me, the hardest part of the pandemic was that I couldn't see my friends in person and we couldn't spend time together. Life changed a lot because school closed, and things like swimming lessons, Cubs and clubs stopped. I missed school and my friends. I did see the neighbours in my street and Mum said there was lots of community spirit with things like the clap for the NHS. Cubs did a 'Camping at Home' which got us doing new things at home, including taking part in an attempt to break a World Record!

Home schooling at home with my Mum wasn't fun and I found it hard work. Mum said she found home schooling hard too because she had to juggle working from home with home schooling me.

At first, the pandemic made me feel a little worried. I was worried the virus was out there and my Grandma and Grandad would get sick. Watching some news on



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Newsround helped me understand things. I got angry when schools opened and then closed again. When I first saw people wearing masks it was strange and I don't like to wear a mask because they smell funny.

During the pandemic, I have spent more time on video calls I spent more time with some people that way. I have enjoyed games nights with family friends.

I love spending time on technology and my devices and a good thing from the pandemic is that I have been able to spend time on these. In our church Circuit a new online group for children was created called Junior Church on Zoom. This has been great because it means I get to meet friends, learn Bible stories and have fun, while being on my technology too.

Looking forward, I am really excited for when our bubbles at school can mix and I can sit next to friends in other classes.”

*Jamie, 10, Newcastle District*

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

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