

# Paper B1

## Update May 2019

### Children's and youth work committee

#### Basic information

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<b>Action required</b>	
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To update Mission Council on the progress of the children's and youth work committee strategy in year one and report on Youth Assembly 2019.
<b>Main points</b>	
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	November 2018 Mission Council: B1 – Children's and youth work committee – executive summary of CYWC review report B2 – Children's and youth work committee – children's and youth work review report 2018 B3 – Children's and youth work committee – CYWC outline strategy.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Stephen Thornton John Samson URC communications URCGSF ROOTS Messy Church Greenbelt planning group.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Funding will be sought from a variety of sources for Messy Church discipleship research.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Closer working relationships with ROOTS and Messy Church.

# Update May 2019

## 1. 2018 summary of activity

Our theme for 2018 was Pilgrimage, as children's and youth work explored how to enable all to engage in *Walking the Way*. Pilots worship materials were shared with all URC churches.

At Youth Assembly in January over 100 14-25s asked, 'Are we nearly there yet?'. Hannah Jones was inducted as Youth Moderator, Lawrence Moore was keynote speaker, and the Revd Stuart Radcliffe led worship as chaplain. The Youth Executive were elected and spent 2018 following up resolutions on Greenbelt, merchandise, lowering the age range, creating a handbook to enable synods to support their Youth Reps, and planning for the next Youth Assembly.

In the staff team, Lorraine Webb was appointed Programme Officer, and Steve Tait took on a new part-time post of Pilots Coordinator.

The V&N event was re-imagined as 'The Big Speak Out', a weekend for 43 11-18s focussing on finding their voice and included a presentation to General Assembly. 'What Do You Think?' prepared Synod Youth Reps for General Assembly, where children and youth work committee presented a resolution revisiting the Charter for Children in the Church and hosted a party.

Eight Greenbelt Youth Ambassadors were recruited to support the URC's presence at the festival and promote the event within the URC. A leaders' gathering for volunteer youth workers and Making Space conference for children's, families and youth workers provided support and training. Resources on South Korea were produced for Pilots. Throughout the year a thorough review of children's and youth work was conducted and the report received by Mission Council in November along with a five-year strategy.

The summary of statistics published in the 2019 *URC Yearbook* (from Church Returns forms as at 31 December 2017) showed that while the total average congregation including children had declined by over 5% from 53,379 to 50,587, the number of children worshipping at the main service had increased by over 4% from 14,188 to 14,789, in effect returning to the level of two years earlier. At the same time the number of children associated with the life of the church was maintained at 30,865 (previously 30,784). This implies that our churches, whilst declining over all, may be growing younger.

## 2. Update on General Assembly 2018

Resolution 22: General Assembly tasks the children and youth work committee to re-evaluate the Charter for Children and to bring a Charter to General Assembly 2020

for the URC to commit to, taking into account all that has been referred to in General Assembly 2018 and in the children and youth review and in the wider church.

Children's and youth work committee have set up a task group of CYWC members, URC Youth Executive Members and CYDOs to take this forward. Stephen Thornton has provided the history and context for the original Charter for Children in the Church.

### **3. Update on strategy and implementation of resolutions from Mission Council November 2018**

Mission Council resolutions B2 November 2018:

#### **1. Children's and youth work committee: review report.**

**Mission Council welcomes the 2018 review of children's and youth work in the URC and reaffirms its longstanding commitment to enabling and resourcing children and young people to play their part in the mission of God and its desire for this to be integral to the whole life of the United Reformed Church.**

Following the 2018 review the staffing structure was approved. The Programme Officer one-year post was made permanent, the Pilots Coordinator 0.4FTE post was extended for a second year, and the Administrative Assistant post was confirmed as permanent and a new appointment made. Children's and youth work ended 2018 approximately £20,000 under budget, largely due to staff vacancies.

Children's and youth work has been actively engaged in the development of *Walking the Way* and proactively integrating this into its work. For example the monthly web resources for 2018 followed Holy Habits, the One Body resource included *Walking the Way* ideas, and the new Pilots Programme includes *Walking the Way* challenges. We have been contributing to the development of *Stepwise* through the Learning Standards Board and the Writing Groups for the various streams.

#### **2. Children's and youth work committee: future strategy**

**Mission Council directs the children's and youth work committee to strengthen and support local congregations in their engagement with children and young people through the implementation of the proposed strategy.**

A booklet of resources on One Body (the children's and youth work theme for 2019) was produced to include all ages and types of work with children and young people, including Pilots, Messy Church, uniformed organisations, additional needs, and pre-school through to young adult in addition to all age worship materials. This has been sent to every church along with a companion issue of ROOTS, URC Youth Assembly Round Up 2019, a request for craft contributions for the URC Greenbelt presence and information on Crossfire Camp and the Big Speak Out 2019. Churches identified by their Church Returns as having no children and young people received a focused letter with simple suggestions for how they might engage prayerfully or more actively with supporting children and young people.

A two-year research project to discover 'how can we enable local churches to enhance Messy Church practice for discipleship development' is being developed. This will involve the CYDO+ team supporting local churches through appreciative inquiry and

action research to capture and disseminate innovation and effective practice. Funding for this will be sought from URC and wider sources. In addition, Messy Church training is being rolled out in many synods.

Children's and youth work committee has signed a sponsorship agreement to enable the URC Guide and Scout Fellowship to remain an Active Scout Support Unit within Scouting UK. A new logo for URC Children has been approved to complement URC Youth and grow a sense of identity. Communication is increasing with a bi-monthly e-newsletter, social media presence, and the sharing of good news stories from local congregations (collected through visits to them) along with reports from groups and individuals who have received grants or taken up opportunities through children's and youth work on our web pages.

Annual themes have been agreed for 2020 Common Ground, 2021 Heroes and Villains, 2022 Jubilee, and 2023 Love Is. We are consulting with other departments to see if Jubilee could be a shared theme for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the URC.

### **3. Children's and youth work committee: reshaping the 'CYDO Programme'**

**Mission Council encourages all synods to play an active part in developing, delivering and benefitting from Assembly-level resources, programmes and events in conjunction with the children's and youth work committee through a reimagined CYDO+ Programme.**

A joint meeting of CYDOs with other synod lead workers (together referred to as CYDO+ team) and their line-managers agreed a process for negotiating Assembly level work across the synods, which will take into account the variety of situations, expertise and priorities. This work includes attending conferences and training, developing resources, running events, and other projects identified by the group such as redesigning the Child Friendly Church Award process for the URC. Work is underway to support those synods without CYDOs to find their place within this new culture of team working.

### **4. Children's and youth work committee: future of Pilots**

**Mission Council authorises children's and youth work committee, with Pilots management committee, to develop a fresh expression of Pilots as part of the 'mixed economy' of United Reformed Church children's and youth work.**

Pilots Management Committee (PMC) has agreed a new strapline 'Friends On Faith Adventures' and this will be the name of the new programme being developed. Friends On Faith Adventures or FOFA is being trialled currently and will be launched officially in Autumn 2019 for new groups. The aim is to have 140 new groups in two years (10% of URC). Alongside this, existing Pilots Companies will continue to be resourced and supported, and with the option to use the new material. A short presentation on the new FOFA programme is available. FOFA is designed to work as either a stand alone programme or to complement other provision such as Messy Church, on a monthly, fortnightly or weekly basis.

PMC is reviewing its constitution and relationship to Children and Youth Work Committee to reflect the desire to be an integrated part of wider provision within the URC. PMC now incorporates the Pilots Publications Board and it endorsed decisions to include Pilots worship materials in a wider resource (as trialled this year with One Body), to move The Bridge newsletter to being more frequent and electronic, and to produce

Overseas Voyage materials and FOFA session materials in a loose-leaf format going forwards.

Regional Pilots Officers now receive summary PMC minutes, and will work with CYDO+ team to support existing Pilots Companies and promote FOFA to churches looking to start a new children's work group. PMC is still hoping to recruit a Pilots Advocate – a volunteer role to promote and support the whole Pilots community (to be appointed through nominations committee).

## 4. Youth Assembly 2019 report

**ONE BODY: we're all in this together** 18-20 January at Whitemoor Lakes, Staffs.

Youth Assembly was attended by 98 members of URC Youth from all 13 synods. The programme, planned by the Youth Exec, explored how, as one body in Christ, we all have a part to play in the environment, social justice and creating an inclusive church. Speakers from ARocha, JPIT and Beacon highlighted the challenges and how everyone can be part of the solution. Themes were then unpacked through a wide variety of workshops including craft, Bible study, drama, prayer, outside activities, and going deeper with the speaker. Small groups enabled everyone to make new friends whilst unpacking 1 Corinthians 12. A new feature was Messy Assembly, an hour of happy activity with provoking conversations. The whole event was wrapped in worship led by Chaplain Katie Gravenor, with music coordinated by Elinor Davies. Five Ecumenical Reps were welcomed, and all three RCLs were represented by students. The Late Night Communion led by Carole Marsden was a particular highlight.

Elections for keys roles were conducted, with Reuben Watt emerging as URC Youth Moderator Elect and AJ Mills as General Assembly and Mission Council Rep. There was a report from the first ever Equality and Diversity Rep, Katherine Buckland, who was elected to continue in post. This role now sits on the equalities committee, and is their representative on the children's and youth work committee. Youth Assembly had increased accessibility this year with the layout of the main hall enabling wheel chair access to all areas, the removal of the stage for speakers, optional pronoun stickers for participants to add to name badges and mental health first aid provision. Attention to the diversity of participants is now focussed on increasing levels of engagement, for instance facilitating BAME URC Youth to take up a variety of roles going forwards.

In response to a resolution from Youth Assembly 2018 to consider dropping the lower age boundary from 14 to 11, a Taster Day was held for young people aged 11-16 on Saturday alongside the main programme. Eleven young people enjoyed team building challenges, an introduction to URC Youth, joined Assembly for the afternoon keynote and workshops, learnt about consensus decision making and closed with a time of reflective prayer. In addition, a creche was provided throughout the event to enable parents of Youth Assembly age to participate in the event.

In her closing address as outgoing URC Youth Moderator, Hannah Jones reflected on her sense of call to the role: "It came in the form of URC General Assembly 2016. This assembly hit me as one of the biggest steps the church could have made in progression and inclusion – accepting same sex marriage. There, with those conversations going around I began to think about further inclusivity and diversity within the URC. With some conversations with my colleagues, there sparked the idea of creating the equality and

diversity representation role to bring about further change in inclusivity within the URC. Now being reaffirmed that it is an accepting church of who I am personally, I felt with many years of URC events worth of experience under my belt it was time to step up to the plate.” She concluded with this encouragement to all URC Youth: “Have a little faith, don’t be scared of a little failure, and go out and act, as you all have a part to play within the URC and within the worldwide church.”

Katie Henderson and Natalie Gibbs were inducted as new URC Youth Moderators on a job-share basis, along with the new Youth Exec, and have appointed Jenny Mills as their Chaplain. Two synods (Scotland and West Midlands) have taken the novel step of appointing a small group of young people to share the role of Synod Rep as they work towards finding representation for the future. Wessex Synod, unable to appoint from within the synod, was delighted to have Jessica England (from Thames North, but studying in Wessex) elected as Synod Rep. Southern and South Western remain without representation.

“This was a fantastic weekend to kick off our year as Moderators. We are looking forward to pursuing the resolutions agreed; following up the General Assembly resolution to review the Charter for Children in the Church; working to extend and widen the reach of URC Youth; and making URC Youth even more inclusive. It is going to be a challenging and exciting year!” Katie Henderson and Natalie Gibbs, URC Youth Moderators 2019.

As we said farewell to those attending for the last time, concern was expressed about what comes next for those who move on from YA. The CYWC want to follow this up and engage in conversations with those who have previously raised this concern.

Resolution one

**URC Youth Assembly accepts the changes proposed to the Standing Orders. To be brought into effect from Youth Assembly 2020.**

Proposed Dan Morrell (Immediate Past Mod); seconded A J Mills (East Midlands)

If the amendment is not accepted by the proposer and seconder of the motion, following a discussion, the amendment is then put to a simple majority vote. The Resolution was passed with consensus.

Resolution two

**Recognising the importance of the voices of children and young people within local church contexts, URC Youth Assembly seeks to actively encourage local churches to provide the means for young people to have a meaningful voice at Elders meetings, or equivalent.**

**URC Youth Assembly challenges all URC local congregations to affirm their commitment to young people as present and future members of the church by creating a space within their respective structures for representation by children and young people with appropriate support.**

Prop: Reuben Watt (Southern); sec: Helen Glasse (Eastern). Passed by consensus.

Resolution three

**Acting for mental health and against loneliness in young people.**

**URC Youth Assembly tasks Youth Executive to form a task group, to explore successful youth projects across the UK, with the objective to bring a proposal**

**for a national youth strategy that can be delivered locally across URC churches and reach as many lonely young people as possible to Youth Assembly 2020.**

Prop: Jo Harris (Wales); sec: Victoria Turner (Wales). Motion passed by agreement.

Resolution four

**Youth Assembly, recognising internet access in social locations is now a cultural norm, instructs Youth Executive to request that General Assembly explores ways to assist churches in facilitating wifi access throughout their buildings, including with the legal challenges and obligations. This facilitation could take the form of Synod level training, online guidance forms or similar at the discretion of General Assembly.**

Prop: Joshua Undy-Jamison (Scot); sec: Dan Morrell (Yorks). Passed by consensus.