

Paper U1

Task Group looking at the Church's
Engagement with 20-40-year-olds

Progress Report

Church 2015
United
Church 2015
Reformed
Church 2015
Church



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Task Group looking at the Church's Engagement with 20-40-year-olds Progress Report

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Miss Victoria Paulding victoria.paulding@ntlworld.com
Action required	Resolution below.
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council agrees that the Task Group looking at the Church's Engagement with 20-40-year-olds be extended by two years to thoroughly analyse the research conducted by other denominations, apply this to the URC's situation and bring fully costed proposals to General Assembly 2018.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The Church's engagement with 20-40-year-olds Aims: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To research the issues surrounding the Church's engagement with 20-40-year-olds; To bring fully-costed recommendations to General Assembly to improve the engagement of 20-40-year-olds at every level of the URC.
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other denominational and academic research has been considered; Anecdotal evidence has been considered; Themes are beginning to emerge; The task group is engaging in conversations with Assembly committees and groups; The Church of England is conducting a fully-funded research project looking at the same issues; In order to benefit from the work done by the Church of England, the task group proposes that the conclusion of its work be extended to General Assembly 2018.
Previous relevant documents	The Church's Engagement with 20-40-year-olds – Terms of Reference (Mission Council, March 2014, Paper U) Resolution from General Assembly 2012.
Consultation has taken place with...	General Secretariat

Summary of Impact

Financial	Expenses for task group required for a further 2 years
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Further opportunities to work with ecumenical partners.

Task Group looking at the Church's Engagement with 20-40-year-olds

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1. Following the General Assembly resolution (2012) calling Mission Council to consider how to improve the integration of 20-40-year-olds at every level of the United Reformed Church, a task group was formed. The group consists of six people – Stewart Cutler, David Downing, Sabrina Gröschel, Victoria Paulding, Emma Pugh and Mike Walsh. The group brings together a range of experiences and skills from those both lay and ordained and those within and without the 20-40 age range. The group was formed independently of other Assembly committees but has received support from the General Secretariat. The task group initially operated without a convenor. However, in April 2015 it was decided that a convenor would be beneficial to lead the group's work. Victoria Paulding was then appointed as convenor. The task group has met five times since its formation in September 2014.
2. The task group began its work by looking at the existing research into the Church's engagement with 20-40-year-olds, such as *The Missing Generation* (The Methodist Church, 2011). The task group has also been in contact with the Church of England, who have recently commissioned a research project to determine why 20-30-year-olds who stay in the Church do so. The task group is engaging in conversations with Fresh Expressions and the Young Adults Round Table.
3. In addition to denominational research, the task group has been looking at academic research. Mayo, Savage and Collins' (2004) book *Ambiguous Evangelism* considers the reasons why Generation Y (born between 1980 and 2000) do not engage with the Church (irrespective of denomination). It also considers the faith needs of this group, as well as the differences between Generation X (born between 1960 and 1980) and Generation Y in terms of their perceptions of church and engagement with it.
4. The task group has initiated conversations with Assembly committees and groups, in order to share ideas and gather insights into this issue. In June 2015 representatives of the task group met with the Children's and Youth Work committee and discussed the issues they saw in engaging with 20-40-year-olds, what they thought helped 20-40s engage with the Church and how they saw 20-40s engaging with the Church at Assembly level. The task group is now contacting convenors of Assembly-level groups and committees to discuss this subject and its links with their existing work. The group also plans to hold a discussion at the URC Youth Assembly in order to further ascertain views from the 14-25 age group.
5. In addition to this, the task group has spoken at local level with people in the age-group, including those in churches, those who have left the Church and those who never entered it. Members of the task group have brought their own experiences and conversations from the churches and individuals that they have contact with. Mike Walsh's experiences as a pioneer minister in Manchester have brought valuable insights from some in the 20-40 age range who have never engaged with the Church. A discussion on the URC Facebook page has engaged more in the conversation and provided interesting insights. The task group has devised a questionnaire to be circulated to pioneer ministers, university chaplains, Children and Youth Development

Officers, Training and Development Officers and Church Related Community Workers in order to gather a wide range of views from those in the 20-40 age range, both inside and outside the Church.

6. So far, the majority of the task group's work has been fact finding. Many themes are beginning to emerge, including:
 - Praise for the URC's youth and children's work;
 - Young people leaving the Church when they move out of the family home or move to university;
 - Sunday working hours and shift work affecting 20-40-year-olds' ability to attend Sunday morning services;
 - Lack of social aspect in churches which 20-40-year-olds are looking for;
 - People returning to the Church once they have their own children;
 - A view that you need to be a Christian before you go to Church, rather than going to Church to explore faith issues;
 - A need to look at how the Church evangelises, and how it defines what it is.

7. However, all the evidence gathered so far is anecdotal. The task group feels that if it is to make recommendations to the Church, through General Assembly, it needs harder evidence to base these recommendations on. In light of the research being conducted by the Church of England (which they are willing to share with the URC), the task group proposes that we study this evidence and then conduct further research to make it appropriate to the URC. The Church of England's draft findings are due to be published in January 2016. In order to fulfil Mission Council's terms of reference thoroughly, **the task group proposes that its work be extended by two years to thoroughly analyse the research conducted by other denominations, apply this to the URC's situation and bring fully-costed proposals to General Assembly 2018.**