

A group of passionate young people from the South East of England got together in February 2010 to talk about what the Youth Participation Strategy should be aiming for in its goal of involving young people more.

EMPOWERMENT

Young people need the Methodist Church to equip, support and release their young people; be willing and courageous enough to let them “call some of the shots”, and to give their ideas a go. They have a wealth of experience, knowledge and ideas, and only they can truly understand and each their own generation.

NATURAL INVOLVEMENT

Young people want the Youth Participation Strategy to create a culture in which everyone is involved ... to the point where young people and adults reach out to one another and barriers are broken down ... to the point where it is no longer noticeable that young people are *not* involved ... to the point where the church evolves naturally to become a body that will listen to and connect with the next generation.

Young people want to help make decisions and be nurtured as they take part in shaping the way we do church. They recognise that this will take enthusiasm, flexibility, strength, communication, commitment and a change in attitude on both sides.

ADAPTING TO THE NEXT GENERATION

Young people want the chance to implement quality, well-advertised activities and events that their peers will want to come to. They want to show young people that Christians have a living faith, that they are normal and that there is more to church than Sunday mornings. They want to minister to their community and provide for them in a way that allows them to connect with God. And they want their churches to be places that are welcoming and based on supportive, accepting relationships with others.

WHAT ABOUT THE WAY WE DO CHURCH AND WORSHIP?

How can our churches be made more accessible and relevant to young people in and outside the church? Can worship styles be mixed? Should alternative options be offered within services or as a separate one? Can this happen midweek? Does worship even have to be sung at all?

Amongst this discussion was the key message that we should accept one another’s styles and that worship shouldn’t cause division ... Indeed, it was felt that worship should not even be restricted to a Sunday morning or be seen as one’s entire spiritual upkeep for the week! Church should be an ongoing community of people who mutually support and nourish one another and can happen at any time and in any place.

PREPARE TO BE INSPIRED AND CHALLENGED

Please listen to the podcast and be inspired by what this group of young people have to say (video also coming soon!). Most of all, remember that young people are individuals. As this group said themselves, one group cannot represent the opinions of all young people. Please think about how

you can empower the young people in your churches and circuits to be heard and prepare to be challenged! If you would like to know any more information about the Youth Participation Strategy in the South East, or would like any support in knowing how to go about making it happen, please contact Rachel Quinlan on 07929 503937 or quinlanr@methodistchurch.org.uk