

Children & Young People by Megan Tillbrook and Stefanie Hoyle

All URC churches have been contacted by one of us before the end of 2017. Visits to the churches started as early as September and continue for the foreseeable future. These visits have taken numerous formats including presentations to elders and leadership teams, informal chats with individuals such as ministers, volunteers and paid workers and visiting the children and youth activities that are running. As we travel around the Synod we are always encouraged and motivated by the willing hearts of those involved despite challenges working with children and young people presents. We have had the privilege of being involved in outstanding junior church sessions, lively pilots evenings and busy toddler groups. These visits will continue into the coming months. If we are yet to visit your church and you would like us to please get in touch!

We recently held our first gatherings for CYP workers and volunteers earlier this month (February). Just fewer than 30 people attended from across the Synod. The program gave the participants time to rest reflect and recuperate and was very well received. We have put together a questionnaire to gather information regarding training needs and levels of support/local networks. This is with the view to hosting or sourcing relevant training sessions and creating support networks. On the 4th March there will be an Easter Resources Workshop to equip CYP workers and volunteers with practical ideas and resources ready for the Easter season.

In November 2017 we attended the Leading Your Church into Growth Conference (LyCiG). Although not all of the content was direct applicable to our Synod wide roles it gave us a good knowledge base of this concept which a number of our churches have adopted. The week also allowed us to reflect on how our roles can support and influence church growth. Through our learning we produced an annual plan for our own work. As our thoughts progressed to how we can most effectively package and promote the annual events we researched other denominations and charities and decided to brand our work under 'Wilderness.'

As is apparent, since October Synod 2017 where a number of young people provided feedback on the youth residential at Marrick Priory, we have worked hard to build relationships both locally and nationally, and develop opportunities for children and young people in the Yorkshire synod. Following the success of October Synod we will continue to host a youth Synod alongside the main meeting and are working to identify how we can further grow the involvement of young people in Synod matters. The next Synod is on 10/03 at Sheffield Central URC from 10.30am.

We were pleased to join 14 young people and young adults (largest number to attend from Yorkshire in many years) from our Synod at youth assembly. It was a blessing to witness such an empowering and inspiring event for young people who belong to the URC church.

We are now part of the Children and Young People's Task group for the Five Northerly Synods. In October and January we met to discuss what we, as CYDO's, CYPDP's and equivalents could do to work together to enhance children and young people's work in and across our respective synods. After a productive conference in Newcastle, we developed the idea of creating a residential event for children aged 8-11years old. We hope that bringing children together, introducing practices from Youth Assembly and ensuring an enjoyable weekend we can nurture a sense of belonging to the URC family. The event will be called URChildren1st and will be held at the end of July 2019.

We have begun to meet with our equivalents in Other Denominations including the Anglican, Methodist and Baptist church and numerous local and national charities.