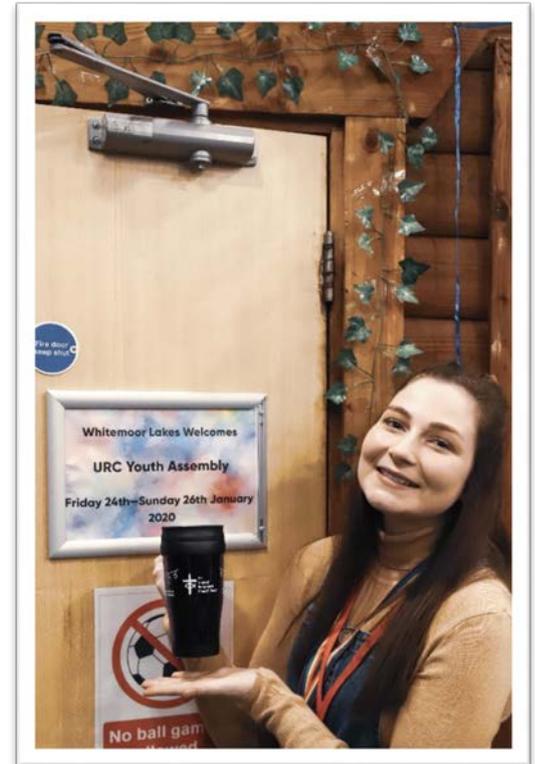


Youth Assembly 2014 is where my moderator journey began. I never would have known it then, but a few people saw the potential in me and encouraged me every step of the way. My first assembly was such an eye opener. I never knew what the URC looked like outside of Scotland, outside of pilots, that's all I'd ever experienced of the URC. Me and a couple of friends decided we wanted to come to this youth assembly thing, I mean if nothing else we got a day off school for it- albeit at the price of waking up [at 5am](#). Since then, I haven't looked back. I guess you could say it was much more of a marathon than a sprint. First, I became the national synod of Scotland Youth Rep, I then became pilot's rep, spent a short period on exec as a co-opted member and then was elected as co-moderator elect 2 years ago. The past 6 years have provided me with some of the best memories, friends, opportunities and lessons.



#### Memories:

I was going to share some of my favourite memories with you all, but I quickly realised that there are far too many to pick from and a part of what makes memories so special is that they are personal, the memories that I have will mean nothing to the majority of you. They're all 'you needed to be there' moments.

#### Opportunities:

At the last Youth exec meeting I was a bit of a mess thinking back at the last 6 years. When asked what I was most proud of achieving I simply replied 'everything'. I realised that the opportunities I've been given have played such a massive part in where I am today. Since the age of 17 I've been travelling up and down the country alone, often leaving at ridiculous hours of the morning. If I hadn't done this, I probably wouldn't have had the confidence to move to London 2 years ago. I've gone from not being able to do a presentation in front of 6 people to delivering this speech to 150+ people. I've witnessed the positive change in how we as a church discuss what were previously, and still sometimes are, taboo subjects such as mental health and most recently here this weekend with sex, faith and relationships. Last May at mission council I got to be play a very small part in the decision to disinvest from fossil fuels- a massive achievement for URC Youth. I've been extremely lucky to have the opportunity to travel abroad twice. I went to the Dominican Republic with the charity Compassion which lead to me sponsoring an incredible little girl named Nashla. And very recently, in September I travelled to Israel/Palestine and had my eyes

opened to harsh reality and injustice Palestinians are facing. These are only a few of the incredible opportunities I've had.

When Natalie and I first went into this, sharing the role was completely new to us, we were aware that it had been done once before in the past but neither of us had experienced that. We had no idea how it was going to work but we knew that moderator was something we both wanted to do, that we both would struggle with the time commitment due to work and that we were already friends and would work well together, so we went for it. The past 2 years have brought me and Natalie even closer, we are basically the same person now. I cannot say a big enough thank you to Natalie for all that she has put up with. Working with you has been such a joy, and although the modship is coming to an end our friendship definitely isn't.

Lessons:

Don't be afraid to try something new: In the last 6 years I've experienced so much change. I finished school, moved to Glasgow to go to uni, got a degree in children's nursing, moved to London and started working at Great Ormond Street Hospital, all things I never would have imagined I would be brave enough to do. I'm sure a few of you are sat watching Natalie, Reuben and I, or any of the fabulous exec team, thinking there's no way you could do it, know that you can. That doesn't mean it won't be scary. Public speaking still scares me and is still something I find extremely challenging, but I like to think this hasn't held me back at all.

Never stop making new friends: Like many of you, many of my best friends are people I have met through URC Youth. There's so much to be gained from speaking to new people and hearing their stories and experiences. I am fortunate, or unfortunate depending on how you look at it, in my job in that I get to spend 12 and a half hours a day talking to parents and families. Sure, it can be awkward to begin with but so much can be uncovered in a conversation that starts about the weather.

Do not underestimate the power of being a young person in a church full of old people. Most of us come from a church in which being under 60 makes us the minority let alone being under 26, but that does not need to hold us back. Youth assembly has empowered me to use my voice, to challenge the church on aspects that need to be challenged and to embrace the common ground that is present in every church/synod/denomination. We are the here, the now and the future.

I want to leave you with a quote that I chose randomly in a workshop during my first assembly. It was everything I needed to hear in that moment and still has so much relevance to me now.

God says: "My love isn't based on what you have done or will do for me. I love you for who you are- the you of you"