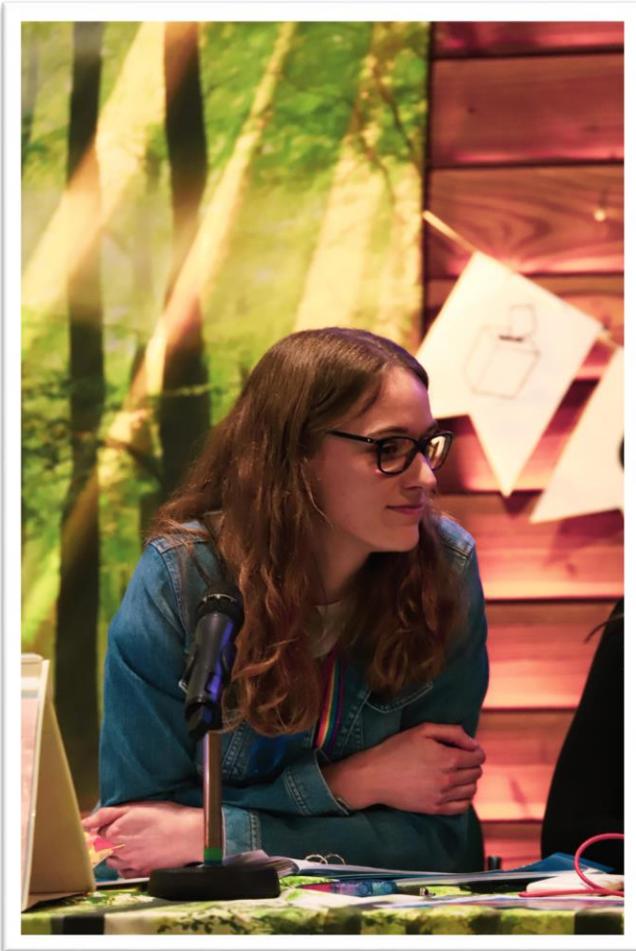


What a year.. How do I even begin to sum up everything that's happened during our time serving URC Youth as Moderator...

I'm going to start with a bit of my journey up to this point.



I remember sitting in Church whilst I was at university and hearing someone say that 'God works at the end of your comfort zone'. At that point in time I thought I was already pretty good at that, I'd moved out of home, was enjoying being the Synod Youth Representative for the East Midlands and I'd even just signed up to live and work in South America for three months – that seemed to be enough challenges for a while. I was pretty sure I would never ever run for Moderator and even if you'd asked me just a couple of months before if I was going to stand for election the answer was still a definite no.

My reasons or excuses were many – I didn't have enough time – my job meant I was out of the country a lot and wouldn't be able to attend all the meetings I should as Moderator. I was also happy to be serving on the Youth Executive and enjoyed staying very much behind the scenes. On top of this, I used to hate even the idea of public speaking (and still find it pretty terrifying at times) – therefore I was fairly confident the role of Moderator was not for me.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, God had other plans and was about to drag me out of my comfort zone

in a spectacular way. Katie and I decided that we could run to be Moderator together – and between us would be able to find the time to carry on working and also take on the challenge of being co-Moderators. To our surprise we were voted into this role and our two years of adventure begun – firstly spending a year following in Hannah's footsteps and more recently with Reuben.

So in our year as Mod we've been to many, many meetings and done quite a lot of travelling (show map), my personal highlights include the opinions of young people being influential in the decision that resulted in the URC voting to divest from fossil fuels – a real example of what young people can achieve when we work together. This is something we should remember and take encouragement from – we can and will be listened to and our opinions really do matter.

I also got the opportunity to visit Germany to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. It was a pleasure to meet our partners in the Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz and think about the walls that separate us – both physically and metaphorically and what we can do to remain connected in times when we seem to be moving further and further away from each other. It's so important to listen and

understand the thoughts and opinions of others and I think as URC Youth we're pretty good at that – as we've shown in our business sessions this weekend.

Don't get me wrong this past year hasn't always been plain sailing – I definitely found this year challenging – especially juggling the pressures of work alongside doing all I can as URC Youth Moderator. There's been times when I physically haven't been in the country to attend various meetings, and other times where I've not been able to give as much time as I'd like to, and times when I've been exhausted from running from work to exec and back again. Reuben, I'm slightly jealous of the time you'll have available this year but make sure to take time out for yourself too – there's always room for an extra member of Theatre club!

I've also learnt a lot about myself this year –

Lesson Number 1 - I'm stubbornly independent and struggle asking for help and delegating tasks - however, I soon learnt that there was no way I was going to be able to do everything I needed to on my own – and I've definitely learnt quickly to ask people for help when the mountain of modship got too overwhelming – Jo and Reuben – your surrounded by people who would love to help you – just make sure you ask them.

Lesson Number 2 - The best part about being Moderator, without a doubt, is the friendships you make and I'm forever grateful for my wonderful executive for always being there to support both of us. We're the ones that get to stand at the front but we absolutely wouldn't be here without a fantastic group of people behind us – thank you for everything you've done over the past 2 years.

So my message to you all is to go for it – get involved and don't worry if things seem to be outside of your comfort zone.

I know that it's easier said than done – but I promise you that God will equip you with all the skills and talents you need to fulfil your role – whether it's one within URC Youth, the Church or wider society. You don't have to be good at everything, and quite frankly no one is – you're not on this journey alone. You'll be surrounded with a group of people who have the skills you lack (and for some reason some people seem to actually enjoy spreadsheets and the intricacies of the URC Standing Orders – cheers Nick!). There are people within URC Youth who will support you on your journey and if you're lucky – they may just become some of your best and most reliable friends – despite the fact they live miles away!

Together, as young people, we can and **do** make a difference in the Church, in the communities in which you live and the wider world. Take the opportunities that you are given, there are so many things you can get involved in within URC Youth so keep an eye on our social media and get involved! Don't be afraid to take that step outside of your comfort zone – it may just end up being the best thing you've ever done.

So Reuben, Jo and next year's Youth Executive – I hope you have the most fantastic time and I cannot wait to hear about all the amazing things I know you will achieve. And finally, URC Youth – thanks for a great 6 years – and as much as I'm looking forward to having a bit more free time I'm definitely going to miss it all.