



URC Youth Assembly Round-Up 2023

27-29 January 2023
Whitemoor Lakes

This January, young people from all over England, Scotland, Wales and beyond came together for a great weekend of fellowship and worship, and to share what we were passionate about with other young people. Our theme was **'Love is...'**

We explored the theme of loving ourselves, loving others and loving God through worship, workshops and small groups. Our workshops included **'Love is... Home'**, which explored the issue of social housing, **'Love is... forgiving and powerful'**, which explored forgiveness in the Bible, and **'Love is... colourful'**, which was an opportunity to explore what love means to each of us through craft.

Our worship was led by Youth Executive on Friday and Saturday, and by our chaplain, Matt Barkley, on Sunday. On Saturday we had a keynote from Stephen Ansa-Addo about how we can express our love for others, our love for ourselves and our love for God. In each worship session we received a different coloured thread to help us pray into, and remember, our love for ourselves, people we find it hard to love, love for our community and world, and how God's love intertwines through all of these.

Very late Friday night we had a campfire with hot chocolate, marshmallows and biscuits along with some classic campfire songs. Our Saturday entertainment was provided by the amazing Christian musician and rap artist Guvna B, with whom we had an amazing time dancing and worshipping!

Youth Assembly said a fond farewell to our wonderful 2022-2023 Moderator, Jo Harris (National Synod of Wales) as well as two Youth Exec members who had come to the end of their term, Ella Lemon (East Midlands) and Kai Weinberg (Yorkshire). Heather Moore (Southern) was elected Moderator-Elect. Fiona Bennett, Moderator of General Assembly, led our induction of Philippa Osei (Thames North) as Moderator of Youth Assembly, the first ever BAME person to hold this post, as well as the 2023 Youth Executive.

This year our theme was **love**. Love is many different things: love is dangerous, hard, selfless, easy, natural and all-encompassing. Love is something we all know either in our lives through friends or family but also through Jesus. Throughout this weekend, we looked at the love we have for others and the love we have for God, and God for us. I hope it has allowed you to look at the love you have in your life and to become closer to God. I just want to leave you with a question to ponder following Youth Assembly: **What is love for you?**

Jo Harris – outgoing URC Youth Assembly Moderator

“Dance like no one is watching, love like you’ve never been hurt; sing like no one is listening, and live like it’s heaven on earth.”



“It was great to hear about the inspiring works of the URC Youth and to learn how the URC and Methodist Church can, and does, work together. It was a time of good food and, importantly, good fellowship.”

James Carver, Methodist Youth President

Love

i3...

Annika Müller & Leandra Götz,
representatives from Evangelische
Jugend Pfalz, Germany

**“URC Youth Assembly 2023 was
such a great weekend. We learned
much and chatted with so many
heart-warming people.
We will never forget
this experience.”**



Green Apostle report

I am the URC Youth Green Apostle (someone who you could reach out to if you need environmental support, information or advice, and to share any ideas you have about making the Church or URC Youth better for the environment). I attended the first of the URC Green Apostle yearly meetings where we discussed: the cost of living crisis and how to respond while keeping the environment in mind – like insulating buildings and taking part in energy-saving surveys. We also looked at how we can make sure more churches and synods are involved in Eco Church and know about all the resources available to them.

Eco-Church (Eco-Congregation in Scotland) Bronze, Silver and Gold Award is run by A Rocha UK, equipping churches to care for God’s creation through their worship, buildings, land, community engagement, and individual lifestyles. There is a survey which churches can take to see how all these things affect the environment and how they can reduce their impact. There is a youth friendly version here: www.urch.org.uk/your-church/family-friendly-church

I am the youth representative on the Net Zero by 2030 task group which will be looking at making the whole Church carbon zero by 2030 following the resolution passed at General Assembly. I have also joined the Education and Learning task group and the work they are planning looks promising so far: developing a more accurate carbon calculator for travel to help know how much to offset and encouraging people only to travel when necessary.

Maya Withall (Wessex)

URC Youth General Assembly & Assembly Executive Rep report

Following Youth Assembly 2022, URC Youth took two resolutions to General Assembly, which then were passed!

The Mental Health First Aid resolution requested that churches have one member of their leadership team be Mental Health First Aid trained. Mental Health First Aid training is designed to equip people to recognise and respond to people having a mental health crisis as well as making them aware of what professional help is available for those people. URC Children’s and Youth Work and some individual synods have been offering subsidised Mental Health First Aid training on Zoom and in person.

The second resolution allows Youth Assembly to nominate candidates for the role of Moderator of General Assembly. This was brought in response to a historic lack of diversity in elected posts at Assembly level. Youth Assembly 2023 passed a resolution which puts this nomination process in place; this is now possible! This means that any young person who comes to Youth Assembly has the opportunity to nominate someone to be Moderator of General Assembly. I’d encourage all young people to consider which Elders, ministers or CRCWs they know in a local church or synod who might have the skills to be General Assembly Moderator.

This goes to show what a powerful and influential voice young people have in the Church, not just surrounding issues which directly affect us but in the whole life of the United Reformed Church. I can’t wait to be involved in the motions URC Youth bring to General Assembly 2023 following this Youth Assembly, and with Youth Executive to advocate for the voice of the young people in the whole Church.

Laura Everard (Wessex)



Youth Assembly Resolutions

1. Enabling Youth Assembly to nominate a candidate for General Assembly Moderator resolution

Youth Assembly accepts the proposed addition to the Youth Assembly standing orders (subject to final advice from the URC Business Committee), to come into effect commencing Youth Assembly 2024.

Proposed by URC Youth Executive

The motion was passed by consensus.



2. Champion for Younger URC Youth resolution

Youth Assembly agrees to create the role of Champion for Younger Youth to be on the Youth Executive starting in 2024 as an active voting member, whilst also being the voice of 11-17s within URC Youth.

Proposed by URC Youth Executive

The motion was passed by consensus.



3. Quiet Spaces resolution

Youth Assembly tasks each synod to strongly encourage churches to introduce a quiet space for people to go when they feel overwhelmed or want to be in a calm space. In addition, Youth Assembly urges the Disability Awareness task group to include advice and guidance on creating these quiet spaces.

Proposed by Beth Clayton (West Midlands Synod)

Seconded by Ella Lemon (East Midlands Synod)

The motion was passed by consensus.

4. Substance Misuse resolution

Following on from the passing of the Mental Health First Aid resolution at Youth Assembly 2022 and General Assembly 2022, Youth Assembly recognises substance misuse as a risk factor to mental ill-health, and acknowledges the importance of educating others and raising awareness. Youth Assembly urges synods to create a publicly available database of organisations and contacts which will signpost professional support for substance misuse and rehabilitation for individuals, mental health first aiders, and local churches.

Proposed by Nathanael Stinton (National Synod of Wales)

Seconded by Isla Munnik (National Synod of Wales)

The motion was passed by consensus.



5. Warm Spaces resolution

URC Youth Assembly recognises the importance of Warm Spaces and would like to praise the URC buildings that have already signed up to this initiative. URC Youth Assembly would also like to encourage churches who are not currently involved in this to explore the possibility of opening their buildings as a Warm Space, or to support or collaborate with other local churches and community organisations that are involved in the scheme.

Proposed by Helen Brown (Southern Synod)

Seconded by Reuben Watt (West Midlands)

The motion was passed by consensus.



6. Inter-church Support resolution

Youth Assembly requests that URC Youth Executive bring a motion to General Assembly and to the Church Life Review Group to encourage local churches to build concrete and developed relationships and partnerships with other local churches to share resources, not just limited to the URC denomination.

Proposed by Isaac Irvine (West Midlands Synod)

Seconded by Lia Mills (West Midlands Synod)

The motion was passed by consensus.

7. Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory motion

Part a) URC Youth proclaim that Israel's laws and practices constitute apartheid against Palestinians.

Part b) URC Youth welcome Paper I2, brought to the 2021 GA, especially Resolutions 26, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, & 35. With 2022 being the most deadly year for Palestinians in the West Bank since the second Intifada (2005), and 2023 on its way to being worse, URC Youth wish General Assembly to lament the deaths and worsening situation for Palestinians, to move away from the rhetoric of 'two sides', and to listen and respond to the call from Palestinian theologians and activists to name that the crime of apartheid is being committed against Palestinians in the area encompassing the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

Proposed by Victoria Turner (National Synod of Scotland)

Seconded by Philippa Osei (Thames North Synod)

This motion was deferred by agreement to Youth Assembly 2023, allowing time for members to learn more about the issues before voting.



8. Extend term of Clerk resolution

URC Youth Assembly wishes to extend the term of the current Clerk to cover Youth Assembly 2024.

Proposed by URC Youth Executive

The motion was passed by consensus.

9. Gender and Sexual Identity Discrimination resolution

Youth Assembly task URC Youth Executive to create a task group to investigate existing support and needs for people in the URC with regards to discrimination involving their gender and sexual identity, to create a centralised resource. They will bring their findings to Youth Assembly 2024 as well as publishing an update halfway through the year.

Proposed by Daniel Raddings (Yorkshire Synod)

Seconded by Heather Moore (Southern Synod)

The motion was passed by consensus.



2024 Youth Assembly
26-28 January at Whitemoor Lakes:
Story, Story, Story



URC Youth Executive 2023

- Moderator – Philippa Osei
- Moderator Elect – Heather Moore
- Assembly Executive & General Assembly Rep – Laura Everard
- Equality & Diversity Rep – Alanna Hurman & Megan Westgarth
- Northern Synod – *vacant*
- North Western Synod – Jadan Turner
- Mersey Synod – *vacant*
- Yorkshire Synod – Daniel Raddings
- East Midlands Synod – *vacant*
- West Midlands Synod – *vacant*
- Eastern Synod – Brandon Stein
- South Western Synod – *vacant*
- Wessex Synod – Maya Withall
- Thames North Synod – Aaliyah Stewart
- Southern Synod – *vacant*
- Synod of Wales – Nathanael Stinton
- Synod of Scotland – Michael Smith

Supported by:

YA Clerk – Elinor Davies

Chaplain – Joe Amoah

CYDO+ Trainer – Lorraine Downer

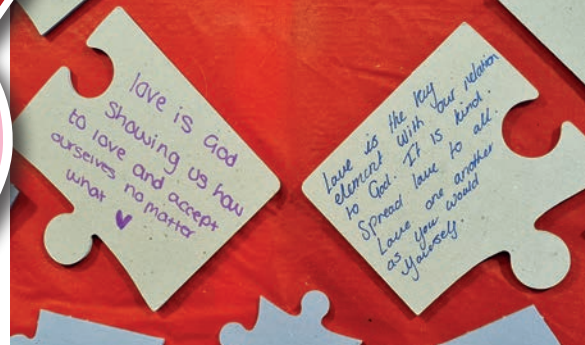
Head of Children's & Youth Work –

Sam Richards



Stephen Anna-Addo, keynote speaker
"Youth Assembly this year was vibrant and full of energy. There was a warm welcome and plenty of examples of the theme (LOVE IS...) being put into action."

The worship was vibrant and holy, such a wonderful atmosphere! Thanking God for this generation of worshippers and truth-tellers."



Equality and Diversity Reps report

At Youth Assembly 2022 there was a workshop about disability in churches, looking at how the definition of disability is broader than we think, and also includes hidden disabilities and dynamic ones. The workshop group saw a need for greater awareness and education across the URC.

We have actioned this by creating a URC Learning Hub resource. There are the modules which anyone can enrol on: Models of disability, Theology of disability, Neurodiversity in the Bible, Different disabilities. Each module will contain videos and a range of other interactive ways to learn. For the Different disabilities module, we are asking anyone who feels able to record a small testimony about your experience of having any form of disability – please contact us.

This will help to raise awareness and understanding around the different disabilities and how we can encourage people to begin to understand how they can help those with disabilities, knowing that the support needed is different for everyone.

We have worked with Youth Exec to develop the exploration baskets of resources on the tables in our main meeting space – to subtly encourage more inclusion and aid participation at URC Youth Assembly.

Megan Westgarth and Alanna Hurman (Yorkshire)



URC Youth Review Task Group – Fran Kissack is convening the review group who are consulting widely. She was at Youth Assembly representing the group and listening. You can email the group URCYouthReview@gmail.com.

Please contribute your stories and thoughts about URC Youth to the review here:

