



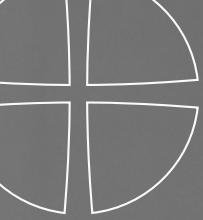
# THE METHODIST CHURCH IN IRELAND'S YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S STRATEGY

## INTRODUCTION

The Methodist Church in Ireland, through its youth and children's team has been carrying out an 'Exploring the land' exercise in 2021/2022. As we emerged from the Pandemic, we recognised that it was a key time for us as a church to consider how and what we would do to continue to develop our work with the next generation. We asked questions like; What is God asking of us? What are the opportunities? The challenges? Why do we want children and young people to be part of our church communities?

It was a time of 'taking stock' and 'exploring the land,' that involved surveys and focus groups both North and South. We were encouraged by the response to surveys and involvement in specific focus groups for parents, leaders/clergy, and young people, alongside group and individual conversations with clergy. Two reports were written to capture the findings that informed a strategic planning process. The process involved the Connexional Team, Connexional Youth and Children's advisory group and some key practitioners, including IMYC staff. The hope is that what we have observed and heard will inform and shape the churches work with and for young people and children over the next decade.

The task of reaching and walking with the 'next' generation is a whole church mission and task and so the below vision and strategic priorities are not solely the job of those who we consider experts with young people and children, but for the Methodist Church as a family young and not so young, across this Island.



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## VISION

We were grateful to Dr. Helen Warnock for her leadership through the strategic planning process. The paragraphs below are the vision she heard articulated in the room on our strategic planning day, as we all reflected and responded to the 'Exploring the land' reports from the North and South of Ireland.

Children and young people matter. We love them, we have a heart for them, and we carry a mission imperative to engage them.

We carry a vision for a generation who will shine.

- Their passion for Jesus shines and is obvious to all around them and draws others to them and God.
- They will recognise that at times they need to be counter cultural.
- They will know their place in the intergenerational community of wholehearted followers of Jesus that is Methodism.

So, we stand before God and acknowledge we need His help. We acknowledge we carry some sense of lament as to our current state, the state of the church and the home or lack of home that we are for children and young people.

We are open to new ways, as we seek to value relationship building, provide places of safety and participation, as we engage with the tough aspects of life and encourage discipleship. We want to pray with young people and link well with their families as we work intergenerationally.

We will seek to do this through a youth and children's strategy and engagement that is owned and prioritised by the whole church.

- Where children and young people are heard and valued.
- And money and resources are released locally and nationally.



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# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2023 - 2028

\*Where young people are mentioned the age range we are focused on is 25 years of age and under.

***"By 2028 there will be a substantial increase in the numbers of young people who are wholehearted followers of Jesus for the transformation of the world."***

What do we mean by 'substantial'?

A substantial increase will mean the Methodist church in Ireland will look different due to the life and vitality young people and children bring as they live as disciples of Jesus, sharing their faith and heart.

### **FOUR KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

1. Every Circuit strategy – Accompanying every circuit as they develop a strategy to enable them to be intentionally discipling and actively reaching young people and their families.
2. New Faith communities – Pioneering new faith communities, whose primary goal it is to reach young people and their families.
3. Leaders who are young – Intentional passing on of leadership, engaging and releasing the under 25s into leadership that shapes the Methodist Church in Ireland.
4. Theological resourcing – We will be a church that is engaging and informing on cultural issues so that young people have safe spaces to process the issues and questions relevant to their world and stage of development.



## THE METHODIST CHURCH IN IRELAND'S YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S STRATEGY

# EVERY CIRCUIT STRATEGY

## CONSIDERING THE 'HOW?'

### EVERY CIRCUIT STRATEGY

To develop a circuit strategy that focuses on intentionally discipling and is actively reaching young people, which has the aims of :

- developing an understanding that discipling of young people is a crucial part of the mission of the whole church
- building communities of transformation in which young people become wholehearted followers of Jesus and take their place in God's mission.
- recruitment, training and ongoing support of volunteers

This will be achieved through:

1. Focusing in: Working with the DSs, through prayer and discernment, IMYC will identify a number of Circuits which IMYC staff members will then accompany as they develop a circuit strategy.
2. Placing of youth workers, supported by Connexional funding as necessary. It is proposed that this is a key strand in Connexional mission strategy as resources are released.
3. Multiplication: by telling the stories of the difference made and training for ministers and key lay people by IMYC, circuits will develop and implement a strategy.
4. Connexional events: These have proven to be significant in young people coming to faith in Jesus and growing in that faith, they complement and provide resource for the work locally by their ability to catalyse and accelerate what God is up to, as they build community, and provide opportunities to serve and encounter God.

## CONSIDERING THE 'HOW?'

### SOME THINGS TO NOTE:

- Accompaniment – IMYC members of staff will listen, ask, probe, challenge, inspire, identify, call out and resource as they accompany a circuit.
- Identifying the who, where and where not in the context, will involve sacrificial decision making, and enable the work to be contextually relevant.
- It will be necessary to identify clergy and other leaders who have heart and vision for this work. Leadership matters. Capacity will need to be created by releasing them from other responsibilities to focus on this and invest heavily with time and relationships.
- Training, support, accompanying and resourcing will have the aim of giving confidence to the local context to grow existing work or start something new, enable them to place it at the top of the agenda and create an action plan.
- Youth workers employed will focus on enabling others/building volunteer capacity in the local context.
- Sundays matter: A recognition that the Sunday gathering matters and needs to say to young people you belong, they need to be accessible.

## CONSIDERING THE 'HOW?'

### NEW FAITH COMMUNITIES

Pioneering new faith communities, whose primary goal it is to reach children, young people and their families will be achieved through:

1. In year 0-2 - intentionally planting/resourcing two/three new faith communities. This will require prayer, discernment, identifying leaders and contexts, a release of people, resource and space.
2. In year 2-5 - Telling the stories and gathering the learning as these communities grow and develop.
3. In year 5-10 - multiply!!!!
4. Drawing on the experience within Methodism and the experiences of other churches, in partnership with Home Missions.

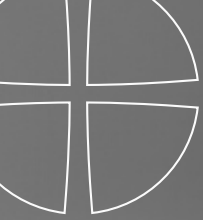
## CONSIDERING THE 'HOW?'

### LEADERS WHO ARE YOUNG

Intentional passing on of leadership, engaging and releasing the under 25s into leadership that shapes the Methodist Church in Ireland.

This will be achieved through:

1. Training in mentoring and coaching skills for those who walk with young people.
2. Identifying and giving opportunities for young people to use their gifts and skills both locally, nationally, and globally to develop them as spiritual leaders.
3. Giving opportunities and spaces to explore vocation and calling, as already happens at Autumn Soul and Soul Mates.
4. Allowing young people to shape worship for their generation and the next both locally and nationally.
5. Creating opportunities for children and young people to truly participate in the life of the local, connexional and world church by training volunteer leaders/workers and clergy in participation and hearing the voice of young people and children.
6. Developing and investing resource in Internship opportunities—pioneer and youth and children's work.
7. Developing and investing resource in service/mission opportunities in Ireland and beyond.
8. Overflow type events developed to train young leaders across the whole island.
9. Safe space leadership opportunities at MCI events – where it's ok to fail, apprenticeships alongside older leaders.



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## THEOLOGICAL RESOURCING

### CONSIDERING THE 'HOW?'

#### THEOLOGICAL RESOURCING

We will be a church that is engaging and informing on cultural issues so that young people have safe spaces to process the issues and questions relevant to their world and stage of development.

1. This will involve producing and sourcing resources and thinking/thinkers that/who can engage young people theologically and in a Methodist way.
  2. This may involve investing in theological training for existing/new staff.
- Safe spaces – through events regionally and nationally we will model creating safe spaces that allow young people to process issues and questions that matter to them, with significant adults.
  - An intentional shift from transactional programmes to building communities in which transformation happens. Resources and training to enable local churches to create these communities.