

LISTENING & RESPONDING TO CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Reporting back on Network Meeting 3

15th Nov 2022

LISTENING TO EACH OTHER = LISTENING TO GOD



"I am doing something new - but it is yet to be born. I am always doing something new, and it is always beautiful. Many of you want to listen until new strategies are revealed, or tough decisions are made. However, listening is the outcome I am looking for. As you listen you will learn more about me; as you listen you will become closer; as you listen you will be more able to join in with my purposes; and as you listen I can reveal all that I am doing and how you can join me in this. But listen well to me and to one another."

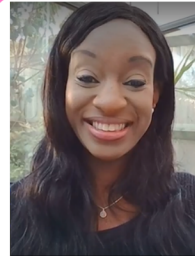
By Ben Lucas, Missional Listener, Charlton Down, Dorset, shared in the network meeting today by Owen Green.

TODAY'S BIG QUESTION



What does RESPONDING to children and young people really mean? How do we do it?

Can you think of an example of when a person or group of people have responded really well to a question, concern or idea of yours?



Bola-Alysia Ayonrinde is the National Education Lead for Racial Justice at Church of England. She gave a beautiful talk about **RESPONDING**. If you would like to watch this talk, please email to ask for the video link. Her words inspired some of the thoughts below from members of the network:

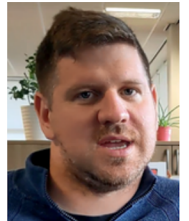
"We talked about not listening for what we might want to hear but for what young people actually want to say."

"We spoke about how reflecting back to young people what we've heard can be really important in keeping true to their views, not ours, and giving them an opportunity to correct us when we get it wrong"

"We chatted about how our learning and preparedness to say 'I don't know, I'll go and learn about this,' affects how children and young people feel when they share their ideas and feelings."

PRAYER

Jonathan Masters is the Children, Youth and Families Missioner in the Diocese of Chester, and has been instrumental on the team co-shaping this network. He wrote and prayed this beautiful prayer for our time together today.



Let us pray.

God, we thank you that we are your precious children. We thank you that you hear us and respond when we cry out to you.

Help us to echo your love in how we hear and respond to children and young people. May they know your love because of how we listen and respond to them.

Help us listen today. Help us learn today. Help us respond to your prompting.

In the precious and holy name of Jesus Christ we pray.

BIBLE REFLECTION...

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity".

1 Timothy, 4:12

What does this verse mean to you?

WE HEARD FROM...



SEVERAL YOUNG PEOPLE WHO CONTRIBUTED TO TEARFUND'S "BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE" REPORT

We watched the young people's video and reflected on HOW they asked, and what their asking made us FEEL. We thought about why that is, and what our feelings are telling us.

*"That's heart-breaking...young people saying, "we need you to step up"
"I love that ending - 'if you don't, we will'"*

WE ALSO HEARD FROM...



A young man with a big challenge: *"The Church of England is one of the biggest landowners in the UK. I think it should use the land to grow food and to show people Creation so that they can help too. And it should be creating places where nature can thrive"*.

*"My question is, what's the theological reason for *not* taking that young man seriously?"
Sam Wilson,
Diocese of Chester*

We thought about **why** and **how** we should respond to this kind of challenge. We opened up about some of the **fears** we may have, and the **barriers** we need to overcome. We discussed who we would need to **collaborate** with in order to respond well.

WE THOUGHT ABOUT...



We spent 5 mins in total silence, reflecting on the some of the things we think young people care about. We asked ourselves these questions:

*What do I need to learn?
How will I educate myself?
Who can I work with?*

Some of the group shared their reflections, others kept them private:

"I am reflecting on Jesus and his approach to the woman at the well. He moved into a very difficult conversation which changed the outcomes for the woman.

So much more can be said but what if the church walked towards these conversations and listened to those who feel they want to speak into these topics. We should feel challenged and uncomfortable, that's how we can grow"

"I need to ensure that my groups are inclusive, and that I am providing equity of access to these conversations particularly for young people of UKME/GHM backgrounds. I need to listen to my colleagues in these groups and those advocating on their behalf and ask how I can better serve."

*"This is too much for one person to hold,
so let go,
give it to your Father,
whose hands are big enough,
and love is vast enough.
Rest in His arms."*

FEEDING BACK TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS...

We write to the young people who have contributed to the network meetings, thanking them for their input, describing some of the discussions that their videos simulated, and keeping them up to date with the work of this network. It's very important to us that when young people have given of themselves, we enter into dialogue and are accountable to them. If any of our contributors (young or older!) particularly impacted you, please do email hannah.persaud@churchofengland.org - we would love to pass your encouragements and gratitude on.

PRAYING FOR OUR YOUNG COLLEAGUES



The National Younger Leadership Groups help develop leadership skills and character virtues for young people through a year-long online leadership development programme, allowing them to be catalysts for positive change within their schools, communities, and churches. Additionally, young people are provided with a platform to engage with, and contribute to, the strategic development of the Church of England.

The new cohort of young people began their groups today, just as we were finishing our meeting, so it was lovely to pause and remember them, and to ask our network to pray for the young people who are learning to lead and being courageous in speaking out, for the adults facilitating this work, and for wisdom and courage in responding to what they say.

For more information, please visit the [NYLG website](#).

Would you like to have this opportunity? Share this website with your teacher or chaplain!

OUR HOMEWORK

It's important to us that we work on this issue practically between meetings. This month, using our new structural plans, we will find out what some children or young people want to say as part of the church on an issue that is important to them. We will push ourselves to engage with differing opinions and examine ourselves. Where can we find out more? Who can we talk to? What can we read/watch to educate and engage ourselves? Can we work on this collaboratively with someone else?

REFLECT

Before we came to the meeting today, we re-read Article 12 of the United Nations Convention to the Rights of the Child, to remind ourselves that it is a child's right to have an opinion and for it to be listened to and taken seriously.



What do you think about this statement?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Jonny Masters (Diocese of Chester) writes: If people would like to explore LGBTQ+ identity in relation to the CofE do take a look at the [Living in Love and Faith resources](#).

NEWS...

Stephen Beamond (Programmes Lead) is developing a [Strategic Leaders' Programme](#) for professional development of leaders and aspiring leaders in the Growing Faith spheres. Free pilot! Stephen.Beamond@churchofengland.org

Cheryl Govier (Partnerships Lead) has opened applications for [Growing Faith Hubs](#) - centres of learning where schools and churches are resourced to further embed creative practices that build the partnership between school, church and home. Closing date this Friday 18th Nov! Cheryl.Govier@churchofengland.org for info..

You are warmly invited to the Church of England Foundation for Education Leadership [National Conference](#) on January 23rd - check out the webpage for details of the fantastic range of keynote speakers, practical workshops, networking and collaboration opportunities!

NEXT MONTH...

Our big question will be: How will we FACILITATE children and young people to contribute to the decision-making life of the church? We will be making practical action plans for 2023.



GET IN TOUCH!

Hannah Persaud is the Networks Lead at the Growing Faith Foundation. She facilitates this network. Hannah would love to hear from you! Hannah.Persaud@churchofengland.org