

## 3Generate 2018

On Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> November the Circuit took 14 children and young people with 3 of their parents to the 3Generate Methodist Youth Assembly weekend in Southport. We were there last year, and had been very cold, so we were better prepared this time taking sleeping bags, extra layers and even a fan heater! It was hard work for the leaders and a responsibility to be trusted to look after children some as young as 8 but, reflecting afterwards on the challenges we faced within our own group, we all felt there were so many positive outcomes and experiences that it was well worth it. The young people (and parents!) enjoyed and engaged with the activities, workshops and worship and even the 6 hour journeys on the coach turned into a time of fellowship and sharing.

3Generate has taken place at 'Pontins' holiday camp in Southport for the last two years, having outgrown its previous base. To get to and from Southport is a large undertaking but we were very lucky to have a brilliant coach driver called Bryan and a modern and comfortable coach to travel in. We found out later that Bryan's wife had christened the coach 'Monty'. Monty and Bryan did so well we were the very first coach to arrive and register! At the event, young people lodge together in their own chalets, with leaders in adjacent chalets in case of problems. This is very different to what a lot of the children were used to but by and large they settled down to it nicely.

3Generate starts at 7pm on Friday and continues until 1pm on Sunday after morning worship. There are multiple activities going on all day suitable for ages from 8 through to 23 years old. Our group fell into the 8-11 age except for Bethany who is 17. We had not set ourselves expectations that were too high - the main concerns were to get the children there and back safely, ensuring they have a good and positive experience of a church-led event and that they would 'bond' together. Sure enough, there was a lot of fun: the children all went swimming together, played in the soft play area and some with any energy left on the Saturday night went to the 'silent disco', but the children took part in some thought-provoking activities too including attending the welcome show by the incoming youth President; responding to bible stories retold by story-teller Bob Hartman; and contributing to a 3Generate scrapbook about issues concerning our young people.



One of the joys and challenges of going away as a group is preparing and eating meals together so we turned one of our chalets into a 'social space' where we could meet, eat and talk. This worked well, especially as we had brought lots of food goodies that we could all munch on during Saturday, while we rested and recharged between events. There were always 2 leaders at this base, leaving 3 others to escort our unaccompanied children to their activities and our parents free to be with their own children or with us, as they pleased



The event ended in a Sunday morning worship with youth choir, puppetry, story-telling, songs and a message of encouragement to the children by one of the 3Gen volunteers. Each child received one of the '1000 letters' written to the children by members of the Methodist Church Connexion.

Instead of being an anti-climax, the homeward bound journey was a time of sharing, thanking, and praying. One of the children even prayed out loud for Mark Tizzard District Youth Work Enabler, who had joined us for the weekend as a leader, as part of her 'thanks' to him. Carmel asked the children questions about the Sunday worship, which she had not been able to attend, and it was encouraging to see how much they had taken in. Of course, we also filled the time with a lot of nonsense by taking votes on 'favourite colour', favourite song', favourite joke and so on. We even



had a discussion on narwhals - you needed to be there to understand! In the end the journey went by very quickly with a couple of stops and we were back in Andover by 7.30pm on the Sunday.

The leaders, parents and children would like to thank the Circuit for the financial support to enable the trip to 3Generate to take place, their prayers and thoughts, and for any who wrote one of the 1000 letters – THANK YOU!