

Appointment of Youth Delegates to Lothian and Borders Presbytery

Rationale

Over the past few years a number of congregations in Lothian and Borders and across Scotland have undertaken a course called Growing Young. Originally developed by Fuller Youth Institute in the USA, this course aims to help congregations reconnect with and be a place for young people. Those who have done the course have found it helpful, challenging and stimulating with a resultant change in their congregational DNA to be more open to involving young people across the whole spectrum of church life.

That is fine for local church but what about regional church? How can a Presbytery become more open to the involvement of young people in a meaningful way? How can the regional church give young people a voice and a place in deciding the future of their church?

One of the key lessons from Growing Young is something called **keychain leadership**. Rachel Dodd one of the main leaders of Growing Young, describes keychain leaders like this:

Often the persons who are most trusted in an organization are given a set of keys to the building. Those people also hold the most power—they can literally decide to let people in or to keep people out. Keys provide access to physical rooms, as well as to strategic meetings, significant decisions, and central roles or places of authority. The more power you have, the more keys you tend to possess.

But while we can think of a set of keys tangibly as a physical privilege and responsibility of leadership, they can also be symbolic of the capabilities, power, and access leaders in a church have to carry the potential to empower young people. No matter how many “keys” you hold (whether physically or symbolically), if you are willing to entrust your keys of leadership to young people, they will trust you with their hearts, their energy, their creativity, and even their friends.

In terms of Presbytery the main key is ordination as all full members of Presbytery are ordained. Ideally Kirk Sessions would ordain younger people who could then be appointed Presbytery Elders but as we know, many congregations do not have younger people to ordain. We should also recognise there are people in Presbytery because they actually like to get involved so we do not want to lose them.

Legally we are constrained by numbers because each Congregation can appoint one Representative Elder, 28 balancing elders and 24 additional elders. Notice though still elders.

Presbytery can appoint any number of Corresponding Members who can play a full part in the life of Presbytery but unfortunately cannot vote and cannot be present for business taken in private. They do not need to be Elders.

At the moment there is no way round this because our Presbyterian polity is founded on ordination of Elders. The Church Courts Act states:

14. CORRESPONDENTS

14.1 A Presbytery may elect Correspondents, who shall have the following rights in respect of meetings: to receive papers, to attend and to speak but not to vote. A Correspondent need not be a Minister, Elder or Deacon of the Church of Scotland. A Correspondent shall not be present when business is taken in private.

In practice we do not distinguish between a full or corresponding member. We do not check someone's status before counting a vote or moving a motion and effectively function as a single body. We rely on people's integrity to observe the rules of their appointment to Presbytery.

It is proposed that Presbytery create a new category of appointment, A Presbytery Youth Delegate who will have all the rights and responsibilities of a Corresponding membership.

Rules for Selection

These regulations are based on those of Youth Representatives to the General Assembly

- I. Each Congregation shall be entitled to appoint one person to serve as a Presbytery Youth Delegate
- II. Each Youth Delegate shall be between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five at the time of their appointment
- III. They shall be involved in the life of a congregation within the bounds of the Presbytery and shall be regularly involved in the life and worship of the Church of Scotland

Appointment Process

- IV. The Kirk Session of the congregation shall provide an extract minute of their appointment as Youth Delegate on behalf of that congregation detailing a summary of their involvement in the congregation
- V. A Youth Delegate shall give written confirmation of their willingness to serve and abide by the Standing Orders of Presbytery prior to taking up the role
- VI. Youth Delegates shall serve for a period of one year from 30th June in the year of their appointment and may be reappointed each year till the age of 26
- VII. If during the course of a year a Youth Delegate stands down it will be open to the Kirk Session to offer another name who will see out the term provided they fulfil the criteria of sections I to V above

Role in Presbytery

- VIII. Youth Delegates will have all the rights and responsibilities given to Corresponding Members.
- IX. Youth Delegates may serve on Committees or other groups as decided by the Nominations Committee
- X. Youth Delegates shall be entitled to speak and move motions but not to vote.

Ongoing Support from Presbytery and Local Congregations

Presbytery can be a daunting place, especially for young people. Whilst we do not have the people resources to supervise our Youth Delegates the way Youth Representatives are at the GA we do have a duty of care. The proposal would be for either the Clerk, Mission Officer or Resourcing Ministry Convener to meet with each Youth Delegate and do a gifts survey which will allow us to identify where they will be the most interested and have the greatest impact, then to gather all Youth Delegates together in late August, before they attend their first Presbytery, and then again in March before exams begin.

Responsibility for these gatherings would lie with Resourcing Ministries Committee and the Mission Officer.

Conclusion

There is no way round our polity and the question of ordination at the moment. Our only avenue without going to the General Assembly and changing the nature of our denomination is to use the route of Corresponding Membership, even though it may not give us everything we want or give our younger people everything they want.

Therefore:

Presbytery is invited to approve the following deliverances.

1. Presbytery approves the regulations contained within sections I to X for the implementation of a Presbytery Youth Delegate Scheme.
2. Presbytery agrees to incorporate Regulations for Youth Delegates into its Standing Orders
3. Presbytery encourages Kirk Sessions to consider the ordination of young people into leadership.