

Article reprinted from *Cross†Way* Issue Spring 2010 No. 116

(C)opyright Church Society; material may be used for non-profit purposes provided that the source is acknowledged and the text is not altered.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND YOUTH COUNCIL

By David Phillips

The CEYC is a body of young Anglicans (ages 16-24) who meet twice a year to represent the views of young Anglicans to the wider church. A group from the Council attend General Synod as observers in July each year and both participate in some discussions and make presentations on particular issues. In addition the Council now appoints three of their members to serve on General Synod and they often find it easier to get to speak in debates than many other members.

Whether the Church really needs a Youth Council is debatable but it does exist and what it says and postulates seems to carry considerable weight. Because of this influence it is important that evangelicals are well represented on it, otherwise it will give the impression that young Anglicans are liberal and that the conservatives are all old fuddy-duddies. Given that many evangelical churches have a high proportion of young people, not least in university towns, this is a balance and impression that needs to be redressed. Indeed according to one estimate 90% of young Anglicans are in evangelical churches.

Please do not write off the CEYC, please consider whether you (if you are of age) or someone you know might become part of it. You will no doubt be concerned that those who get involved will be seduced by liberal theology. I cannot deny that this might happen, but others have survived and been strengthened in their convictions through getting involved, so it is perfectly possible to survive the experience. Indeed the Council provides great potential as a place for fellowship, for Bible learning, for practical training in apologetics and for theological debate. Those who get involved need to be mature in faith, but they could achieve a great deal if they are willing to serve in this way.

Most Dioceses appoint two young people to the CEYC and all expenses are paid. There are other evangelicals involved, and if you respond to this article it is likely that others will too. What is needed is evangelical sixth-formers and students with a strong faith and a firm understanding of the Bible who are willing to join in and take part in a gospel work.

The Council is not a Bible-camp, those who attend will not necessarily find it easy, but they will have the opportunity to make a difference. It will be important that young people who respond are upheld in prayer by their churches and are helped to understand and engage with the issues they will confront. Some evangelical churches can act as if anyone involved in wider church affairs has already gone off the rails, that will not be helpful. Those who get involved need to know that they are supported and the local church needs to see this wider engagement as part of its own responsibility and mission.

If you are a young person interested in following this up, or you know young people who might rise to the challenge, then please contact me at the Church Society office. I can put you in touch with others who have been involved in the Youth Council, and survived.

The Council has a website and there is a map which apparently shows where there are current vacancies. By the look of it there are very few Dioceses which have their full representation – www.ceyc.org.

David Phillips is General Secretary of Church Society