

MINISTRY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE:

STRATEGIES & METHODS FOR LEADERS





DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES

The United Methodist Church

This pamphlet was produced by Young People's Ministries.

If you would like to learn more about the resources that
Young People's Ministries offers, visit us at:

<https://umcyoungpeople.org>

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INTRO

Thank you for caring about young people. Youth and Young Adult years are often when a person makes their decision to follow Christ's example and pursue a life of discipleship. This resource is offered in support of the disciple making efforts of local churches and extension ministries. Through your ministry, current disciples and those who have no religious affiliation will come to know God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Church in a better way.

The following booklet provides highlights of six different resources previously produced by Young People's Ministries. For deeper reading and to engage with the source material for this booklet, please visit www.umcdiscipleship.org/about/resource-booklets and download copies of the source material at no charge.

Each of the six sections contains:

- The essential elements of the source material
- Questions to consider while using the content with youth or with young adults as part of an effective disciple-making system.
- When appropriate, additional questions and suggestions for using the material with those outside the church, or with no religious preference are also included.

Blessings in Ministry,

Young People's Ministries

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DIVERSE MINISTRIES

From Isaiah 43 to Acts 2 the Bible continually illustrates the division-destroying power of God's welcoming communities. How we pursue diversity in our Christian communities matters. United Methodist ministries can excel at creating diverse communities that nurture deep discipleship in young people. We can introduce young Christians to one another across ethnic and cultural barriers by working together on the central mission of the church - sharing the love and grace of Jesus Christ with the world.

DRAWING US TOGETHER

“Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.” – RUTH 1:16

In the story of Ruth and Naomi a diverse community is created when two people from distinct backgrounds walk alongside each other, work together, and create a future together with God's help. “Bind us together” moments can give ministries a starting place to pursue diverse relationships across cultural groups. Allowing those moments takes leadership and a commitment. Local church should look for the friends “traveling” nearby who could be claimed as sisters and brothers in Christ.

For instance, churches on both sides of an urban/suburban divide could get together for a weekend retreat at the nearby United Methodist camp, work together rehabbing cabins there, and experience the blessings of their new broadening community of faith. Or a music ministry could gather artists from across ethnic lines to create a praise band that speaks in the rich musical languages of “all the nations.”

BLESSING EACH AS THEY NEED BLESSING

“There was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” – REVELATION 7:9-12

Even as we begin to create beautifully diverse ministries, the biblical narrative is quick to illustrate the difference between unity and sameness. It is important to note when unique ministry programs are needed to address the distinctiveness of diverse communities. Ministries may need to provide programs in the various languages of the people involved. They may need to make accommodations for those with hearing or sight impairments, anyone on the autism spectrum, or people with other developmental needs. Think of diversity in terms of ethnicity, countries of origin, and culture. Also consider education levels, economic strength, learning styles, political affiliations, physical abilities and more when addressing calls for diversity.

BELIEVING BOLDLY

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

– MATTHEW 28:19-20

Diverse ministries that begin with active faith practices together and encourage deep exploration of the different gifts and needs of their young people are well prepared for the Great Commission Jesus gave the church. Seeking out relationships across cultural divides in our ministries makes evangelism and faith sharing with “all the nations” a more accessible task for the church in general. Such authentic communities can help young people believe again in a church.

Simply showcasing the diversity of our ministries can be a bold witness to the church and the world. The church, for instance, that holds a “mission investment party” for youth from distinct cultural communities around a metro area, can show congregations who are usually alienated how to get together across their socio/economic boundaries. Or the diverse community that created at a Chrysalis or Walk to Emmaus spiritual retreat weekend can introduce new young people to the power of God’s vision for multicultural Christian experiences. These communities can be the place where action together leads to transformative relationships and a revived belief in a savior who seeks all of us.

Diverse members of the Christian body belong together as conspirators in the missional work of the church. Authentic diversity helps body members know that their unique gifts are honored and respected. They benefit from the specific blessings of this church for their context and gain relationships with others who can support them in their Christian discipleship. From this new community, they can come to believe deeply in the power of the Holy Spirit to unite and lift up.

QUESTIONS

Questions for Youth Ministry:

- Where do the youth currently involved in your church experience diversity?
- How does your church draw youth from diverse communities together?
- What existing community activities for youth (sporting events, service projects, etc.) exist that your church could partner with to encourage exposure to diversity?
- How would your youth react to lessons or conversations about the concepts of unity versus sameness?

Questions for Young Adult Ministry:

- What kinds of diversity do young adults want to experience?
- How can your church help draw together young adults to develop relationships that encourage community connection?
- What gifts do young adults in your church have that might be used to bless others as they need blessing? Is there a group that could identify community needs and work to make those a reality?

Questions for Existing Churches:

- How could increasing diversity complement or strengthen your disciple-making?
- Does your church have a predominant culture or a majority group who have similar backgrounds and upbringing? If so, has your church leadership taken time to look at the cultural assumptions that come with that majority?
- What are showcase moments or ministries where the value of diversity is obvious in your church?
- Are there neighboring churches or community organizations that you could partner with to explore ways to be “drawn together” or discover how you could provide each other blessings?

Questions for those outside the church or of no religious preference:

- How does your church talk about the value of diverse beliefs?
- Ask church leadership to put themselves in the shoes of someone who does not know your church and has no religious preference. What would that person say about your church and diversity?
- A person outside the church may have stereotypes about Christians or church. How does your church personally

engage those outside the church to authentically develop relationships and increase their understanding of diversity of thought and experience within Christianity?



INTERGENERATIONAL MINISTRIES

“From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

– EPHESIANS 4:16

God creates, calls, and equips all people for work in the Kingdom. Intergenerational Ministry (IGM) is the church’s faithful response to God’s call for participation in the transformation of the world, using God-given gifts to offer hope to a hurting world and make disciples of Christ.

Intergenerational Ministry is an intrinsic part of our identity and calling. It is a holistic approach that affirms all people, no matter their age, are created, called, and equipped for ministry. God calls people of all ages to show up, live, and work in the world.

WHAT IS INTERGENERATIONAL MINISTRY?

Intergenerational Ministry affirms all people’s joint participation with God’s work in, and for, the transformation of the world. When we recognize and claim God’s presence in the lives of all people, then our response must be ministry that invites all people to participate – regardless of age. IGM is contextual. It looks different in various congregations who faithfully discern God’s call for their unique setting. To determine what IGM looks like in your context, take time to ask and discern:

- What are the gifts in our community?
- What are the needs in our community?
- How is God calling us to work together?

There are three basic ways of categorizing Intergenerational Ministry:

- **SURPRISE** (UNPLANNED/UNINTENTIONAL) Places where the entire body of Christ gathers together without planning or intentional work.
- **EPISODIC** (EVERY NOW AND THEN) Planned IG meals, outreach projects, or individual ministries such as an all church retreat or advent family festival.
- **SYSTEMIC** (PART OF WHO WE ARE) This is when IG ministry becomes part of the fabric and identity of the church as an intentionally intergenerational body. Examples include congregations who intentionally involve persons of all ages in every facet of their ministry. This includes ensuring that all age groups are represented on church committees and in planning groups.

When IGM is a systemic thread of the church's tapestry, every meeting has advocates present who raise questions like: "How are people of all ages invited into this ministry opportunity? What gifts do we have in our congregation that might contribute to this work? Who is missing from this table that we are setting?"

Faithful ministry is intrinsically intergenerational, offering hope to the world while providing ways for all people to work with God while making disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world.

INTERGENERATIONAL SMALL GROUPS

Many churches utilize small groups to aid in Christian formation. These cohorts are often formed based on gender, marital status, proximity, similar interests, and, most frequently, age. Young people often spend their time in church within age cohorts that have like-minded peers and a few adult mentors (volunteer or paid). Growing in discipleship is tough, and made even more difficult without a diverse and deep pool of experiences to swim in. Help youth and young

adults feel like welcome members of the body in small groups of mixed ages!

Not all groups may be well-suited for an IG model, but several typical groups can easily make the leap. Short-term Bible studies that meet when youth are available and that are advertised to youth could be an easy place to begin. Curriculum does not have to be “dumbed down” and many young people want to study deeply and are interested to do so alongside adults, asking questions along the way.

If a Bible study encourages group participation, young people often thrive. Remember that young people may not share their questions or opinions unless asked, or until trust and relationships are formed. Initially, group leaders should be prepared to give more than they expect to receive from young participants.

Life Groups, Accountability Groups, 4th Day Groups, etc. are also good places to include youth and even older children. Young people learn best about discipleship when they hear and see older adult’s experiences and growth in faith. It is good for young people to learn about adulthood from adults! It is good for adults to remember the passion and struggles of their youth.

Intentional age inclusion should also happen on a mission, service, or project team. Anytime the church participates in a mission, locally or abroad, think of ways to include all ages. This way, everyone can learn and participate in the mission of the church together. Some mission sites may not be suitable for children but with some planning, children can usually be included in some way.

QUESTIONS

Questions for Youth Ministry:

- How do youth currently connect with ages both older and younger than them in the church?
- What gifts or knowledge might youth bring to adult groups in the church?
- What gifts or experiences might children bring to youth?
- Where and when are adult members of your church recognized for the work they do with youth? How can more adults become involved in the lives of young people?

Questions for Young Adult Ministry:

- What questions are young adults asking about “adulting”? What settings does your church provide for those questions to be asked of adults who have experiences to share and ears to listen?
- What gifts do young adults have to share with the larger body?
- Would supporting young adults with other connectional groups give that age group enough traction and numbers to become more self-sustaining?
- How could episodic gatherings develop into something more systemic?

Questions for Existing Churches:

- What surprise and episodic experiences of IGM currently happen in your church? Could any of those be starters that could grow into systemic experiences?
- How could IGM be infused into worship, or other church-wide experiences that are central to your disciple-making?
- In addition to age classifications, consider tracking “life-stage” within your congregation. Could new groups form based on life-stage needs like “what problems I want to solve when I grow up” or “raising kids of all ages” or “job changes”?

- How could IGM systemically improve the relationships among the disciples of your church?

Questions for those outside the church or of no religious preference:

- Where do those outside of the church have the chance to experience friendships or relationships with those outside their own age or generation? Are there segments of your community that would benefit from getting to know each other?
- How could intentional intergenerational experiences help someone not connected with a church begin to understand the mission of the church?
- What mentoring or learnings could a person of no religious preference provide to a church? What challenges might a person not connected with a community of faith be trying to face on their own?



MISSION TRIPS FOR FIRST TIMERS

TOP TEN DETAILS EVERY MISSION SITE DIRECTOR HOPES YOU ARE PAYING ATTENTION TO

1. Every site has different forms and procedures. Please be sure to follow those of the place you are partnering with. And if it's a good process for your team, then go back often! If not, keep looking for the partner with the registration process that fits best with your needs.
2. Don't complain about gathering tools! It's a work mission, so putting some effort into bringing the tools that you can will better prepare your team for whatever work arises.
3. Plan to be present for all events and meals planned by your partner organization. Disappearing on a dinner because you just wanted to give your group a treat may leave uneaten food and will be rude to volunteers who may have come to help provide your team nourishment.
4. Share about your trip on social media, and tag your partner often! Most mission sites could use the attention, and your group makes for good-looking pictures and blog posts about how great your experience has been.
5. Strike a balance between offering an affordable trip and being realistic about the true cost of heading out into mission and service. This will involve picking a partner whose costs are accessible, having good fundraising tactics, and not adding a lot of extra costs for recreational adventures.
6. Register for your summer trip by December 1 of the previous year. This might not be required by your mission partner organization, but will certainly help you and your team be prepared once summer finally rolls around. Most sites have some process for perfecting team numbers during the school year before your trip, so just check with them to be sure that you are following those.

7. Plan a DIY trip if you have leadership/staff with the time to both plan and lead the experience, while still growing your relationship with your youth. Sometimes it's hard to be both the trip organizer and the relational pastor at the same time.
8. Remember, some service areas have finite resources for housing or project coordination, so sometimes a lot of DIY-seeking groups complicate the ongoing work there. Be attentive to that!
9. Always build time into your trip to reflect upon the experience daily through Bible study, prayerful discussions, and more. Sometimes visiting speakers or field trips around your service area also help expand your team's faith-filled understandings of why we do this service work as followers of Jesus.
10. Help your team remember that minor discomforts like bad coffee or thin bunk bed mattresses pale in comparison to the good work and relationships you will build during your week of service. If we keep the main thing the main thing, then we'll all have a better week!

TOP FIVE FIRST-TIME MISSION TRIP MINISTRY HACKS TO REMEMBER

1. **FIND** your mission partner organization at umyouthmissions.org
2. **FUND** your trip at revgo.org
3. **THANK YOUR SUPPORTERS** with lots of pictures, blog posts, thank you notes, in-person feedback moments and more!
4. **BE OVERPREPARED** with good counselors, sets of tools, plans for affordable fun, and conversation starters for spiritual reflection.
5. **KEEP FOCUSED** on scriptures like Micah 6:8 that orient

our work around God’s hopes for the world—“What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

QUESTIONS

Questions for Youth Ministry:

- Is the travel time feasible for youth? How will I build community during travel time?
- Does the worksite offer projects that are developmentally appropriate and accessible to my group?
- Is this the first time that youth will be traveling without a parent? How do I prepare them to be responsible for themselves during a trip?
- How will I involve social media or technology during the experience? Will we fast from tech (cell phones, etc.)? Or will we embrace their use and encourage sharing?

Questions for Young Adult Ministry:

- How does the sense of mission or service evolve past youth experiences? Are young adult experiences “youth trip 2.0” or something more?
- Can young adults start their own missions, or can they intentionally be engaged with existing missions from other adult groups?
- How do can young adults experience freedoms on mission experiences that youth cannot? (Safe sanctuaries requirements change, lodging changes, expanded work, etc.)

Questions for Existing Churches:

- How do a mixture of consistent, local mission and service opportunities fit in to your discipleship process?
- How does your church determine the value and cost benefits of trips and travel related to mission?
- How could expanding into further mission support your vision of discipleship?

Questions for those outside the church or of no religious preference:

- What organizations offer service opportunities without the religious component?
- If I were to participate in a religious mission/service experience, why is that different than doing “social good” through a secular organization?
- Do I have to believe or do something particular in order for me to participate?
- Am I going to be asked to “share Jesus” with somebody? I just want to build something.



RESPONSIBLE SOCIAL MEDIA

According to the PEW Research Center, 87% of American teens ages 13-17 have access to a computer, while 73% have smartphones.¹ Often referred to as “digital natives”, these young people are increasingly connected to the World Wide Web, and various social media platforms. While social media makes communication between family and friends easier, it also has its challenges. Even at church, it’s now common to see people checking Twitter or Facebook in the middle of the worship service.

Social media can be both a blessing and a curse for those who work with young people. It’s easier to communicate with youth on social media, yet these same technologies can keep them occupied and distracted when instead you want them to be focusing on worship or other activities.

ADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Stereotypically young people are associated with social media. However, in the past few years adults have begun to use many social media platforms as frequently as young people!

GLOBAL CONNECTION. The beauty of social media is that you can connect with anyone in the world, if they have access to an internet-enabled device and internet connection.

MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS. Social media allows for friends and family to maintain their relationships, regardless of the distance. Photos, special events, and announcements can easily be shared with friends and family members.

¹Amanda Lenhart. (2015) A majority of teens report access to a computer, game console, smartphone, and a tablet pewresearchcenter: internet, science, & tech. Accessed from <http://www.Pewinternet.Org/2015/04/09/a-majority-of-american-teens-report-access-to-a-computer-game-console-smartphone-and-a-tablet/> on 25 nov 2015.

NEWS SPREADS QUICKLY. Through Social Media, news and events from one place can spread quickly, bringing widespread awareness.

NETWORKING. If you are looking for like-minded people who share your passions and interests, you can find them online.

POTENTIAL DANGERS IN SOCIAL MEDIA

PRIVACY CAN BE COMPROMISED. Information posted online can stay online for a long time even after a user has deleted that information.

SCAMMERS. If you have online accounts that store financial information, they may be potential areas of scam exposures.

PREDATORS. Online predators mask their identities and attempt to manipulate children and teens, typically in sexual ways.

CYBER-BULLYING & TROLLS. Cyber-bullying can be worse than real life bullying in some ways because bullies can remain anonymous, and the bullying can be constant.

SEXTING. Social media applications such as Snapchat provide an easy way for young people to send sexually explicit photos to each other with the assumption that no else will see the photos after 10 seconds.

FALSE OR MISLEADING INFORMATION. Catchy headlines, clickbait articles, and opinion pieces without accurate sources and references take advantage of the rapid news cycle. Young people (and adults!) must learn to be discerning in what they consume and believe.

Churches and youth ministries need to address these dangers by engaging young people in meaningful conversations about ways to protect ourselves online.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN MINISTRY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

DISCOVER RESOURCES FOR YOUTH MINISTRY. If you need videos to illustrate next week's Bible Study, you can look at YouTube or GodTube. If you need graphics, you can check out Pinterest, Instagram, or Flickr. Always check ownership of online materials and give credit/ask permission where needed.

CELEBRATE YOUNG PEOPLE'S TALENTS. Help young people express their creativity by allowing them to create their own content – articles, videos, photos, and graphics— that celebrate their faith. By doing this, youth also learn how to share their faith online through their creative outputs.

PROMOTE EVENTS AND CAMPAIGNS ONLINE. Social media can be an effective and cost efficient way to promote events for youth among church members, and to the broader community.

BUILD COMMUNITY ONLINE. Online groups could be a great way for young people to share spiritual insights, questions, and creative outputs in between sessions and events.

BUILD CRITICAL READING SKILLS. Teach young people to verify information, search for the source of what is presented as fact, cross-check with other sources, and identify potential hoaxes and sensationalist approaches to media.

Philippians 4:8 is an excellent verse to help young people talk about online information consumption: “Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.”

SET BOUNDARIES. Social media is simply a communication platform. It can be misused, or abused, and to prevent that, you should set boundaries. Safe Sanctuaries guidelines can expand into virtual interactions as well:

www.UMCdiscipleship.org/resources/getting-started-safesanctuaries

CUSTOMIZE PRIVACY SETTINGS. This applies to personal accounts and online groups. Make sure that only the people who need the information get access to it. Most social media sites allow you to switch your profile between public and private.

BE TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE. If you oversee a ministry with young people, use your church or youth group's official accounts as much as possible. Before contacting a minor on Social Media, secure permission from their parents. To protect yourself and the youth you work with, keep copies of online communication.

BE MINDFUL OF THE DIGITAL DIVIDE. Keep in mind that not all young people have access to Social Media 24/7. There are still young people and families who do not have access to these technologies. Think about them as you create web-based programs and plan for alternative resources.

DON'T USE SOCIAL MEDIA AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR IN-PERSON CONNECTION AND CONVERSATION. Always remember that while social media may facilitate almost instantaneous communication, nothing replaces personal relationships with youth.

DEVELOP YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY OR GUIDELINES.

Talk with the leadership in your church to come up with a Social Media Policy or set of guidelines. United Methodist Communications came up with 6 Questions Every Church Social Media Policy Should Answer:

<http://bit.ly/6-questions-social-media-policy>

PolicyTool **<http://socialmedia.policytool.net>** is another online tool that helps you create your own Social Media Policy.

QUESTIONS

Questions for Youth Ministry:

- What social media platforms are youth currently using? Are adult volunteers on those platforms and encouraged to connect with youth, or not?
- Does your ministry have “official” social media profiles approved for use by staff? How are those profiles managed and monitored by multiple people?
- How are Safe Sanctuaries concepts utilized to protect youth and youth leaders from harm as they interact on social media?
- Are youth empowered and encouraged to run official church accounts related to youth ministry?

Questions for Young Adult Ministry:

- How are young adults using social media to interact with the church and each other?
- Are young adults using social media to positively affect their faith development or seek spiritual renewal and counseling?
- How does the church meaningfully dialogue about trending cultural topics that surface in social media?

Questions for Existing Churches:

- Who manages the social media accounts for your church? How are usernames and password shared for those accounts?
- Are your social media accounts integrated with other church communications, like bulletins or newsletters? How could your print and social media communication be best aligned?
- Do you provide discipleship opportunities through virtual connections?

Questions for those outside the church or of no religious preference:

- If I stumbled across your church's social media presence, what would be my initial thought?
- Are you as a church willing to engage with me if I have questions to ask, even if you've never met me in person?
- How do your social media profiles accurately reflect your church's mission, vision, or values?



WELCOMING, CONNECTING, ENGAGING

For many congregations, young adults can seem like the most challenging groups to engage in ministry.

WELCOMING

Immersing young adults in Christian community begins and ends with how welcome they feel in a community of faith. The years between eighteen and thirty are often chaotic. Welcome this age group by creating opportunities for church members to engage in personal encounters through sharing common experiences. Church members should expect young adults to have complexities in life that are not apparent in superficial exchanges.

The Church must be more than a social club that helps young people cross a threshold into adulthood. Church needs to be a place that supports and recognizes spiritual maturity in addition to physical maturity.

The spiritual practice of abiding is a wonderful model for welcoming others.

“So, we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.” 1 John 4:16

The Church is called to offer a space where young adults can abide in the presence of God, and know that God is abiding in them. This abiding space creates a unique opportunity for hospitality. Abiding in love requires vulnerability, honesty, trust, grace, and patience. Building relationships requires time and nurturing. We become physical manifestations of God’s abiding presence through personal relationships with young adults as they struggle and celebrate.

Welcoming also means incorporating people's specific gifts into the Body of Christ. Young adults want to belong to communities where they will have significant influence on the functioning of the group. The Christian community can offer young adults what they are craving: a group to which they belong that affirms their struggles and passions, embraces them with love and grace, and empowers them to make a difference in the world.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- How is our church hospitable to young adults?
- How does our church provide support and recognition for young adults?
- How does our church recognize spiritual maturity?
- What instances of overpowering isolation, terrifying joy, and beautiful transformation are present in our community?

CONNECTING

Discipleship thrives when communities of deep, personal relationship enable connection. Emerging adults share every generation's desire to belong to a community. Churches no longer have a monopoly on softball leagues, online gaming has created the largest international community the world has ever known, and belonging is no longer synonymous with membership. Yet young adults, like many members of a church community, continue to desire connection.

John Wesley called Christianity a "social religion,"¹ a faith that relies on society, conversation, fellowship, and support. Connecting with young adults does not mean more programming or events! It does mean proactively creating a culture rich with chances for connection.

DEVELOP MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS. Adults between the ages of eighteen-thirty participate in broad social networks and the church can be a part of those far-reaching networks. Young adults may have a distrust of institutions or organized religion, our Church included. Personal relationships guide a young adult's faith journey. Influence is a function of trust, not volume.

DEMONSTRATE CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING. Young adults swim in culture. Not only do they follow trending topics, but platforms now allow them to become full participants in those topics and engage the culture they curate. Church should also become a place that engages culture, meaningfully. Disciples are not called to be counter-cultural, standing in opposition to the culture surrounding them. Disciples are called to be cross-cultural, engaging any experience from the perspective of the cross, using God's story and the life of Jesus to make sense of daily experiences. Culture is not the enemy; culture is an opportunity for exegesis!

MENTORING OPPORTUNITIES. Mentoring should happen in both directions, from older generations to the younger, as well as from the younger to the older. Young adults are digital natives, people that can guide others through a digital labyrinth where churches and older adults feel lost. People over thirty have lived through the life stages that eighteen to thirty-year olds are currently going through and have wisdom to share from those experiences. The nature of what is shared during a mentoring connection is less important than the act of sharing itself.

ADOPT VOCATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP. Many adults from eighteen to thirty are still discerning a call which creates authentic expressions of themselves through their work and life. In the United Methodist Church, every member is also a minister. Encouraging young adults to make that connection

can help them to actively live out their faith, no matter their profession or trade. The church can help connect a person's work life with their faith, and in doing so help young adults discern their life's work and calling.

FACILITATE CONNECTION WITH JESUS. The church should help foster a deeper sense of intimacy with the divine, and help young adults grow in spiritual maturity. The Church does this by helping young adults seek out places where they are likely to encounter Jesus; meeting and serving those at the margins of society, participating in acts of compassion and justice, and practicing acts of devotion and worship to connect with the life and teachings of Jesus. Emulating an authentic Jesus will help young adults wholly integrate faith into their lives.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Who are 'connectors' in my church who could develop relationships with young adults?
- How is my congregation "cross-cultural?" How do we engage culture from the perspective of the cross?
- What questions are young adults in my context wrestling with regarding culture?
- What opportunities do young adults in my context have to engage with those from other generations?
- What knowledge, skills, or gifts do young adults in my context have that would be meaningful for older generations to learn and vice versa?
- How do we ask young adults to explore and express their call?
- How can we equip every member as a minister to ask questions of calling and vocation?
- How many opportunities does our church create to interact with Jesus?
- How do I answer Jesus' question from Mark 8:29? "Who do you say that I am?"

ENGAGING

Coming up with fun engagements that work and help you connect with new people is exciting. The harder part is developing intentional relationships that help us do the work of the church together, all week long. It's been said earlier but bears repeating, young adults are busy. From eighteen to thirty most young adults will be trying out potential careers and paths, starting said career, meeting a lifelong partner, buying a home or choosing where to live long term, having and raising children, and beginning to experience the emotional journey of aging parents. These challenges consume time and energy.

In addition to time constraints, young people of all income strata are not earning a lot of money, they often have significant debt, they don't have a lot of vacation time, work weekends or late into the night, and often can't negotiate with their employer for more time off or less work hours. Pressured to work constantly, parent perfectly, spend time with family, and see friends, young adults feel like they have less time and money to give. The Church must engage young people in the places where they need and want to spend their time, otherwise young adults are unlikely to engage in the life of a community.

While they may be busy, there are several positive traits of this stage of life. Young adults are open to trying new things and investing in new parts of themselves. Young people need healthy and diverse communities (diversity in age is VERY important) to help them discern where they are going and accomplish what they hope to do.

For young adults, engaging time spent in worship, service, small groups, and committee/team meetings should:

- **BE EASY TO INVITE FRIENDS INTO.** Can someone they know benefit or add to this time together?

- **BE EASY TO BRING CHILDREN WITH YOU.** Young children under 5 need to be factored into all activities and that should include figuring out how families can stay together throughout their time with the church.
 - Still provide childcare for those who don't want to bring children with them or when the activity really is not child-appropriate.
 - Be something you can do for **ONLY** a couple of hours on a weeknight or weekend.
- **BE ENGAGED WITH THE CONGREGATION AND OR THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.** If a young adult doesn't make it to Sunday morning but does make it to Life Group or a service event, you should still recognize that person as a part of the community.
- **INCLUDE A DIVERSE GROUP OF PEOPLE** who can talk about life together while they work.
- **INCLUDE FOOD** and maybe an invitation to happy hour or dinner after the event.
- **ASK SOMETHING OF THEM OTHER THAN SHOWING UP**—there should be some meaning for ME being here. Everyone should have meaningful work.
- **INVOLVE A NUMBER OF LEARNING/ENGAGEMENT STYLES** (extrovert, introvert, visual, tactile, etc.).

QUESTIONS

Questions for Youth Ministry:

- How do youth interact with young adults and understand maturity and growth in their own discipleship?
- How could the lessons of connecting with young adults apply to youth ministry?

Questions for Young Adult Ministry:

- Using the reflection questions throughout this section, what seems like the most natural places to begin ministry with young adults?

Questions for Existing Churches:

- How does your church engage with culture?
- What load bearing opportunities exist in your church that young adults could fill?
- What additional ways could your church show young adults that they have value?

Questions for those outside the church or of no religious preference:

- How would a young adult of no religious preference find out about your efforts to connect and engage young adults?
- What opportunities could your church create that would connect with a young adult and not require that young adult to cross the threshold of your church building?
- What professional development opportunities could your congregation offer from exiting members for young adults?



YOUNG PEOPLE'S MINISTRIES

YOUNG PEOPLE'S MINISTRIES (YPM), part of **DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES**, is a global organization that supports youth, young adults, and those who invest in the lives of young people. We create and sustain relationships that help make young disciples. We do this to integrate young people into the life of the UMC and help them live out their faith in the world.

YPM program staff are available as consultants, speakers, and leaders as part of their ministry role.

EVENTS

- **Young Leaders Summits** | Annually, in the Philippines and African Central Conferences.
- **General Conference** | Supporting young delegates and attendees, and coordinating the Young People's Address.
- **Global Convocation** | Every four years, young people selected from around the globe learn from each other and participate in legislation. The next Global Convocation will be held July 18-22, 2018 in Johannesburg, South Africa.
- **YOUTH Event** | The national event for United Methodist Youth in the United States, every four years. YOUTH 2019 will take place July 10-14, 2019 in Kansas City, MO.

MISSIONS

- **UMYouthMissions.org** | Map of youth-friendly, UM-related sites. Browse, explore, and connect.
- **Conspirator Collective (<http://conspirator.co>)** | Engages young people as creators for revived expressions of faith, mission, discipleship and community in the Wesleyan Christian tradition.

RESOURCES

- **UMConnector.org** | Connect to all the opportunities for young people available from United Methodist Agencies.
- **YouthServiceFund.org** | By youth/for youth grant program accepts applications until June 1 for funding to begin the following year.
- **Scholarship.UMC.org** | Find funding for higher education or for a ministry.
- **Devotions** | Check out GlobalYoungPeople.org for devotions by and for young adults, youth, and leaders of young people's ministries.
- **Blog** | Every week, new entries and thoughts from around the connection.
- **Grants for Ministries with Young People** | Available at GlobalYoungPeople.org

DOWNLOADS & BOOKS

- **Sex: A Christian Perspective on Our Bodies, Decisions, & Relationships** | 4 core sessions on human sexuality, along with additional modules for purchase at YPMFaithAndSex.org
- **Everyday Disciples** | Covenant Discipleship with Youth – An encouraging start-up resource adapting covenant discipleship practices for youth. Part of an intergenerational 3-part series.
- **Building Spiritual Muscle** | A 6-week video-based Bible study designed to introduce spiritual exercises into the lives of Youth.
- **Leadership Lab for 6-8 Grade and 9-12 Grade Youth** | 4 and 7 sessions on leadership development, direct PDF download, customizable for your context

LEARN MORE BY VISITING: **UMCYOUNGPEOPLE.ORG**