

## **10 Tips for Creating a Welcoming Environment for Young Adults (in no particular order)**

- 1). **Opportunities for Service**—Many young adults want to put their faith in action and engage in work and ministry that make a difference in the world. Inviting young adults to join in a service project can often times be a more comfortable way for young adults to engage with a faith community.
- 2). **Effectively Communicating Relevance of Ministry (What’s the point?)**—Time is valuable and with the plethora of information and opportunities, young adults are more likely to engage in activities that have meaning and relevance.
- 3). **Understanding the Importance of Work/Life Balance**—A work/life balance means allowing flexible scheduling and creating an environment that nurtures sustainable, valuable, and humane work. Many young adults are keen to prevent themselves from becoming “burnt-out”.
- 4). **Effectively Using Social Media**—Although young adults use social media to varying degrees, it is clear that organizations (including churches) not effectively using social media will become increasingly less relevant to young adults.
- 5). **Asking “Why?”**— Rather than asking “How do we get young adults in our church?” A better question churches could ask is: “Why do we want to engage with young adults?” If preserving traditional church structures is the primary motivation for wanting to engage young adults, creating a “welcoming environment” could be very difficult. Seeking out and building relationships with young adults is a more effective starting point.
- 6). **Creating Genuine Community**—Young adults crave a genuine community that is honest about facing life and faith questions. Mentoring, one-on-one conversations, and space for exploring the realities young adults face (i.e. vocational discernment, religion, sexual ethics, financial issues, drugs and alcohol, family, dating, self-love, etc.) create opportunities for building community. Consider different forms of worship and fellowship, and, importantly, have fun!
- 7). **Understanding Life Stages**—Many in the so-called “millennial” generation face a new life experience very different from that of previous generations. High unemployment, transience, and prolonged time between school and marriage sometimes make committing to a faith community difficult. It is important to consider that these “life stage” differences may have an impact on how young adults view aspects of “traditional” church involvement (i.e. membership, stewardship, serving on committees, etc.) It is important to meet young adults *where they are at in their life journey*, instead of expecting them to engage in church in traditional ways.
- 8). **Creating Different Kinds of Leadership Opportunities**—Young adults may not *want* or *be able* to commit a term on the session or to service on a standing committee of the church. However, they may be more interested in leading specific projects (i.e. a Habitat build, an urban gardening project, etc.) that allow them to use their skills in teamwork and collaboration, without the long-term time commitment.
- 9). **Allowing Space for Questions**—Young adults often do not think in closed-ended, definitive terms, and could feel constricted if forced to accept certain beliefs in order to enter a faith community. Welcoming a climate for faith questions is an important part of building genuine community and creating safe spaces—a practice of *meeting people where they are at in their faith journey*.
- 10). **Understanding Pluralistic Context**—Young adults are growing up in a pluralistic world. Recognizing and celebrating diversity helps young adults both learn from other faith traditions as well as understand the Christian tradition more deeply.