



Reconnecting Young Adults to the Post-Pandemic Church

HPEMBA Congress of Christian Education
Virtual One Day Session
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Session One

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to do the following:

- Identify factors that contribute to the departure of young adults from the local church.
- Recall strategies to cultivate authentic relationships with young adults.
- Evaluate how to realign the church with its biblical mission.

Spiritual Formation

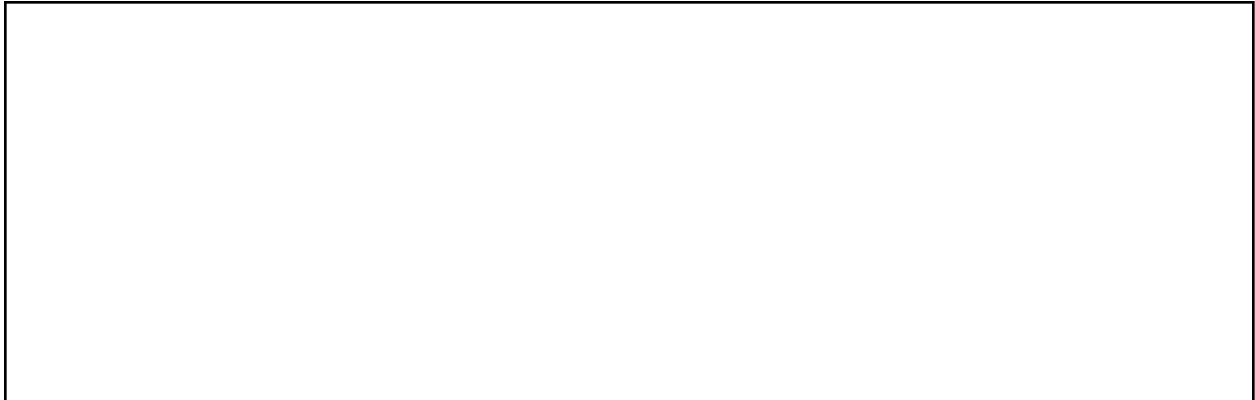
- Knowledge in 🧠 Conviction in ❤️ Action in 👣

James 1:22 (GNB), “Do not deceive yourselves by just listening to his word; instead, put it into practice.”

Key Terms:

- **Reconnect:** To connect again; connect back together; re-establish a bond of communication or emotion (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)
- **Young Adults:** Individuals are often referred to as Millennials who are between 18 - 40 years of age at different life stages such as college, career, and family.
- **Post-pandemic Church:** The body of believers whose mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20) using different methods (Whitesel, 2020; Jones, 2020; Lazarus, 2017).

Where were young adults before the pandemic?



According to the Pew Research Center, White millennials are leaving church and religion, not Black millennials. Online communities provide a space to express the Christian faith in work and community settings. Unfortunately, many Black millennials are asking questions that the church has failed to answer.

Insights from Young Adults

1. How would you describe the church?

- Traditional.
- A social group that excludes certain people including God.
- Ineffective by following cultural norms and political agendas.
- The saved body (bride) of Christ.

2. What misconceptions does the Church have about young adults?

- Age is a barrier to a strong relationship with Christ.
- Preferred music genres impact spirituality.
- Physical appearance determines if one is saved.
- A desire to follow the world and not worship Christ.
- Creative expression with technology cannot be used for ministry.
- Christians cannot pray and go to therapy.

3. Why do young adults disengage from Church?

- Criticism and judgment.
- Inflexibility towards new things.
- Lack of relatability with the preacher.
- The relevancy of the sermon to life.
- The sermons are not transformative.

- Unanswered questions.
- Trauma within the church.
- Lack of relationships beyond the church.
- Unwelcoming environment.

4. What should the Church do to engage young adults in ministry?

- Remember that words hurt.
- Give freedom to ask questions to learn more about the Bible.
- Be willing to listen and learn from different perspectives.
- Provide opportunities to lead.
- Offer accountability in small groups.
- Give the practical application of the Bible.

The Cry for Relevance

"Many churches, and even denominations, have not yet figured out that we are in a different culture and that if we don't change things, we're not going to reach younger generations" (Hammett & Pierce, 2007, p. 30).

Reconnection Strategies

REPENT

"To change your direction; to turn away from those things or activities that displease God and start doing the things that please Him" (Laurie, 2020, p. 377).

- Repent for saying or repeating **unkind** words (Ephesians 4:29).
- Repent for perpetuating generational **battles** (Ephesians 6:10-12).
- Repent for **assuming** and not asking questions (Proverbs 4:7).
- Repent for trying to be the **Holy Spirit** (Romans 12:19).

EMBRACE

"The church has used their strength to benefit the ministry but failed to execute their strategies" (Holy Spirit, 2020).

- Embrace the **strength** and **strategy** of this generation (Proverbs 20:29; 1 John 2:14b).
- **Methods** may differ but the **mission** can remain the same (e.g., Zaccheus, friends of the paralytic, the woman with the issue of blood).
- What perspective is missing during the **decision-making** process (e.g., worship service and strategic planning)?
- Provide opportunities to serve in a **leadership** capacity with guided **instruction**.

CONNECT

“Connect with young adults early, often, and online.”

- Foster intentional relationships **before** high school graduation (e.g., Texting and Facebook Support).
- Focus on relationships **after** the benediction.
- Don't overlook the young adults who **remain** connected to the church (Luke 15:25-32).
- Remember that the church should be a loving and **welcoming** space to address life challenges (Luke 15:17-20).
- Expand the **ministry** of leaders (e.g., college student buddy, campus ministry/Bible study, community colleges, career fairs).
- Develop a “**digital discipleship**” mindset.
- Identify and build infrastructure to support “**digital zip codes**” (e.g., Instagram, Twitch et al.).
- Be intentional about developing a **multigenerational** ministry team.
- Provide opportunities to model the intersection of **ministry** and the **marketplace** (e.g., media ministry internships).

EVALUATE

Acts 17:11 (KJV), “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

- We must evaluate our theology which impacts **doctrine**.
- We must feed before we lead to condition the heart for **change** (Mark 6:1-6).
- We must **teach** how God views ageism, sexism, racism, and social justice.
- Develop a biblical view of **spiritual maturity** that is not based on chronological age (1 Timothy 4:12).

- Our teaching should emphasize a **personal relationship** with Jesus Christ and not religious proximity (e.g., In Christ vs. In Church).
- We must pray to the Lord of the harvest for **laborers** to preach the gospel (Matthew 9:37-38).
- Our teaching should provide a bridge between **Christ** and the **culture**.

“I knew the Lord and the culture. I loved hip hop...But I also loved my mother’s gospel music...” (McCaulley, 2020, p. 3).

Session Reflection

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| True | False | Black Millennials are leaving Christianity at higher rates than other racial and demographic groups. |
| True | False | Young adults are seeking community and relevance. |
| True | False | The church should embrace the strength and strategy of young adults. |
| True | False | Relationship building should begin after high school graduation. |
| True | False | Repentance is not necessary for the church to prosper. |

Session Two: Let’s Talk About It

Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to do the following:

- Discuss the concerns and challenges that local churches in the HPEMBA are facing to reach and retain young adults.
- Develop solutions to reconnect young adults to the post-pandemic church.

Discussion Questions:

1. How is the current leadership structure at my local church helping or hindering young adults from serving in ministry?
2. What support is needed to help young leaders navigate the leadership structure at my local church?
3. What generational perspective is missing during the decision-making process at my local church?
4. How does our church budget reflect a commitment to young adult ministry?
5. What can rural churches do to reconnect young adults?

6. What should we do if we do not have any young adults in our church?
7. What does my local church stand to lose if we don't allow young adults to serve in leadership roles?

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Resources

- [Leader's Pandemic Progress Quiz](#)
- [Jude 3 Project \[Why I Don't Go | S1\]](#)
- [Jude 3 Project \[Why I Don't Go | S2\]](#)
- [Jude 3 Project \[Preaching to Black Millennials\]](#)