

South Queensland Conference

WE THE CHURCH GROW- ING OUR CHURCH YOUNG



Overview

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

OUR REALITY

“ The Church is calibrated for a world that no longer exists.

- THE FULLER INSTITUTE

A Generational Crisis

“We can no longer ignore statistics that show our SDA denomination is ageing. Our older, wiser members are precious to our Church and essential to our God given mission. However, we have a generational crisis that is not adequately being addressed. We are failing to adequately incorporate youth and young adults into church ministry and mission.”

- JOHN FREEDMAN, NORTH PACIFIC UNION PRESIDENT, JULY 27, 2017

“ Generational segregation keeps teens & young adults from becoming all they could be.”

- TIM ELMORE, FOUNDER & PRESIDENT OF GROWING LEADER

Over 60%

Over 60% of young adults who attended church in their teens **will ultimately become spiritually disengaged** at some point during their twenties.

- THE BARN GROUP

**Median age of
Australians:**

37 years

**Average age of
Church attenders:**

53 years

13% of Churchgoers are 15-29 years old

Age profile of Australian church attenders:

- 13% are 15-29yrs - 24% are 30-49yrs - 63% aged 50+

- 2016 NCLS ATTENDEE SURVEY AND 2016 ABS STATISTICS

“ We are failing to adequately incorporate youth & young adults into church ministry & mission.

- JOHN FREEDMAN, NORTH PACIFIC UNION PRESIDENT, JULY 27, 2017

The local Adventist Church is at a crossroads

“We are living in one of the fastest periods of change in human history and the local Adventist Church **is in danger** of becoming irrelevant, even out-dated. The local church is at the crossroads and **needs to Biblically reinvent itself** to stay relevant in a rapidly changing world.”

- KAYLE DE WAAL, HEAD OF THEOLOGY, AVONDALE COLLEGE

Only 32%

Only 32% of Australian Young Adults - Generation Y (18-38 year olds) identify themselves as Christian.

- THE 2017 FAITH AND BELIEF IN AUSTRALIA STUDY

Only 29% of Gen Y Australians attended Church as a Child

Just 29 per cent of Australians aged in their 20s, remember a time when they went frequently to Church, another 38 per cent remember attending occasionally as a child, and a third of our population have no memory of attending at all.

- PHILIP HUGHES 2011 BASED ON THE AUSTRALIAN SURVEY OF SOCIAL ATTITUDES

70% Drop Out

70% of Australian Young People who attend a church drop out before they are 30 years old.

- PHILIP HUGHES 2011 BASED ON THE AUSTRALIAN SURVEY OF SOCIAL ATTITUDES

Many young adults are not graduating to the greater body

“We now have many adults, some in their mid-30s, who have not “graduated” from youth to the greater church body.”

* ADVENTIST RECORD - #WETHECHURCH 11 JULY 2017, MARTIN & ALINA VAN RENSBURG



THIS PRESENTS A CONFRONTING REALITY.



**BUT,
WHAT
IS
POSSIBLE...**



“

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland

- ISAIAH 43:18-19



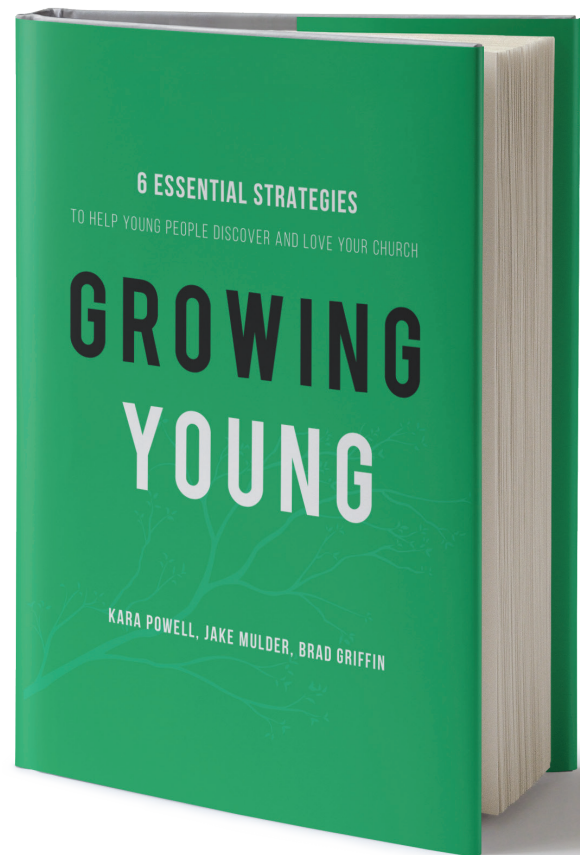


WE THE CHURCH

As followers of Jesus, WE - young, old,
child, adult, student, employee, retiree,
male, female, pastor, church member
- WE are called to BE a grace-filled,
Christ-centred, Spirit-led Church



A CHURCH THAT IS GROWING YOUNG



“ Every young person should have access to a church community that will support their spiritual development. **Growing Young provides research that charts the effectiveness of the church’s role in the engagement of youth and their families.** Church leaders will learn to create and implement strategic steps to strengthen their youth ministry touch.

- VIRGINIA WARD, GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

“ Many leaders today can point out what the church is doing wrong with the next generation. Few leaders have taken the time or done the research to discover what churches are doing right.

- CAREY NIEUWHOF, FOUNDING PASTOR OF CONNEXUS CHURCH



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO GROW YOUNG

All churches grow old... but strategic churches are growing young

Overview

Churches across the West are both shrinking and aging as more young people disengage. However, there are scores of congregations that are bucking this trend and developing cultures that welcome, empower, and engage teenagers and young adults.

The Fuller Youth Institute (FYI) has conducted groundbreaking research with over 250 of these leading congregations to learn what they do right.

The research profiled innovative churches that are growing - spiritually, emotionally, missionally and numerically. Based on this study of a diverse group of churches, they have discovered six essential strategies any church can use to better involve and retain young people. What's more, they have found that as these innovative churches engage younger generations, it breathes life and vitality into the whole church.

Essential Strategies for Churches Growing Young

The research outline six strategies essential to engaging young people:

UNLOCK KEYCHAIN LEADERSHIP

Keychain leaders entrust others with access and authority, and empower all generations including teens and emerging adults with their own metaphorical "set of keys" to help influence and shape the direction of the church.

EMPATHIZE WITH TODAY'S YOUNG PEOPLE

This means "feeling with young people" as they grapple with existential questions of identity, belonging, and purpose; as they experience "systemic abandonment" due to divorce and the self-absorbed adults around them; and as they act out a desire for connection through social media.

PRIORITIZE YOUNG PEOPLE (& FAMILIES) EVERYWHERE

Churches in the study revealed a disproportionate prioritization of young people—an impulse that, rather than excluding older generations, breathed life into the entire congregation. As one pastor put it, "Everyone rises when you focus on young people." Involving young people in every ministry has allowed these churches to thrive with authenticity and intergenerational relationships.

TAKE JESUS' MESSAGE SERIOUSLY

The research were struck by how, in the churches studied, "Jesus reigns over poor theology and his words ring true for young sojourners hungry for life-giving direction." One young interviewee said, "The goal for our church is not really effectiveness with young people, but serving & following Jesus. And young people like me are attracted to churches that want to do that."

FUEL A WARM COMMUNITY

A warm authentic community triumphs over worship style or a multitude of programs. Young people who participated in the research praised their churches for "warm" attributes, such as welcoming, belonging, accepting, hospitable, and caring.

BE THE BEST NEIGHBORS

The research found that in churches growing young, the community offered their young people a thoughtful path to neighboring well. They provide opportunities for teens & emerging adults to serve others, pursue social justice, find their calling, interact and respond to the world around them.

We the Church - Growing Young Adventists

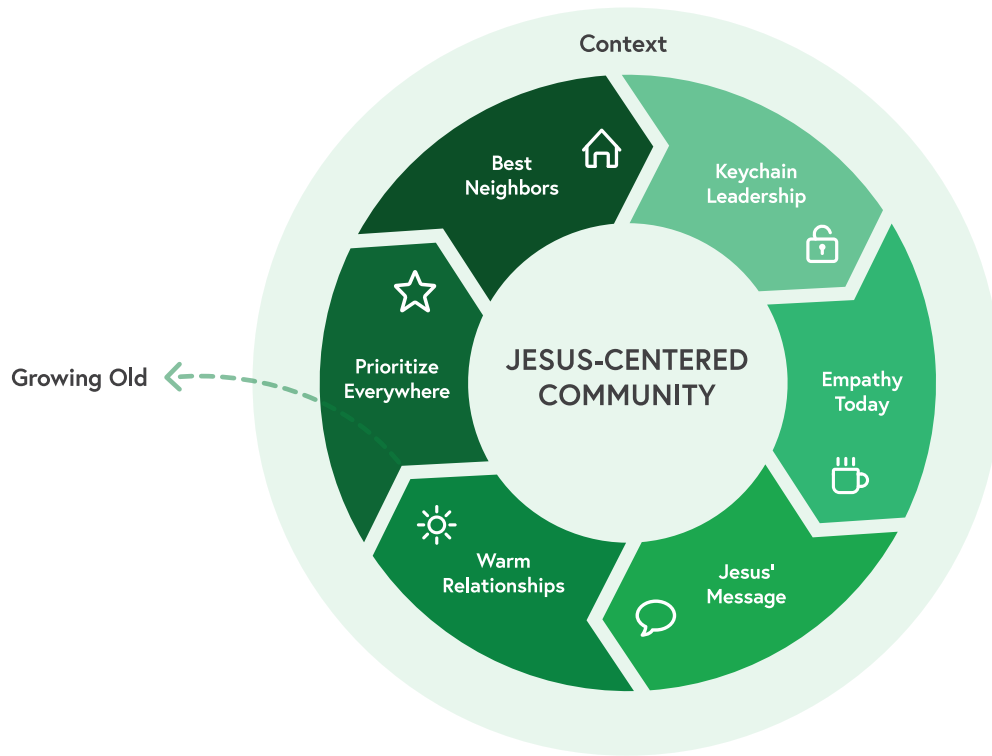
With consultation on a similar journey undertaken by the Adventist Church in the North American Division. 'We the Church' is a learning journey for local churches and leaders helping to build faith communities that will not only survive, but thrive in

the years ahead. It is an inter-generational movement nurturing relationship building and cultural transformation that embraces young people and benefits all generations in the Adventist church. It is Growing Young Adventists, it is 'We the Church'.



THE SIX CORE COMMITMENTS

of Churches Growing Young



Unlock keychain leadership:

Instead of centralizing authority, empower others—especially young people.

Fuel a warm community:

Instead of focusing on cool worship or programs, aim for warm peer and intergenerational friendships.

Empathize with today's young people:

Instead of judging or criticizing, step into the shoes of this generation.

Prioritize young people (and families) everywhere:

Instead of giving lip service to how much young people matter, look for creative ways to tangibly support, resource, and involve them in all facets of your congregation.

Take Jesus' message seriously:

Instead of asserting formulaic gospel claims, welcome young people into a Jesus-centered way of life.

Be the best neighbors:

Instead of condemning the world outside your walls, enable young people to neighbor well locally and globally.

