



Faith Formation with Emerging Adults: Congregational Practices

John Roberto

How can churches address the distinctive spiritual and religious needs of emerging adults? What does faith formation with emerging adults look like? To answer these questions Part 1 of this article presents research findings on what young adults are seeking in a congregation and what congregations are doing to address their religious and spiritual needs. Part 2 presents a variety of congregational examples of approaches, ideas and practices in faith formation with emerging adults. The insights from research and practice provide approaches that a congregation can utilize in developing or enhancing faith formation with emerging adults.

Part 1. Insights from Research

In *Finding Faith: The Spiritual Quest of the Post-Boomer Generation* Richard Flory and Donald Miller report on a study of churches that are engaging emerging adults (post-boomers) and the experience of young adults in these churches. They observe that these emerging adults have embedded their lives in spiritual communities in which their desire and need for both expressive/experiential activities, whether through art, music, or service-oriented activities, and for a close-knit, physical community and communion with others are met. They are seeking to develop a balance for individualism and rational asceticism through religious experience and spiritual meaning in an embodied faith. The dominant characteristic across the young adults they interviewed was a desire for a theologically grounded belief that makes sense cognitively, combined with nonrational expressive tendencies—they want a faith that makes cognitive sense to them and that is also an expressive, embodied spiritual experience. Young adult Christians are searching for a more holistic faith than what a purely cognitive and rational approach can offer. They are seeking both a deep spiritual experience and a community experience, each of which provides them with meaning in their lives, and each of which is meaningless without the other.

Flory and Miller characterize post-Boomer faith as *Expressive Communalism*—reflecting an emphasis on embodiment and community: using one's body in worship; in living out, or embodying, Christian teachings, in service; and in a desire for life in a particular faith community where they can be both personally fulfilled and serve others. They desire a theologically grounded belief that makes cognitive sense to them and that is also an expressive, embodied spiritual experience. Using their research as a guide, emerging adults seek

congregations and faith formation that:

- offer community and spirituality in the context of a clearly defined faith tradition
- offer worship and faith formation that is visual and experiential
- respond to their needs for empowerment, leadership opportunities, responsibility, and accountability, as well as authenticity and accessibility
- strengthen their distinctive Christian identity so that they know who they are and what they believe, and are able to honestly encounter religious differences, understand people of other faiths, and explore areas of mutuality
- provide opportunities for serving the surrounding community, “bringing the church to the community”
- study the Bible and Christian tradition, then apply it to life in an environment that promotes relationship building and encourages questioning
- engage them in creative uses of the history, traditions, and rituals of different Christian traditions for a more physically and visually oriented practice; and encouraging the development of ancient spiritual disciplines, such as silence and contemplation

In the study *Congregations That Get It: Understanding Religious Identities in the Next Generation*, Tobin Belzer, Richard Flory, Nadia Roumani, and Brie Loskota report on their study of fifteen Jewish, Protestant, Catholic, and Muslim congregations who are engaging young adults in congregational life. While they differ organizationally, they share numerous characteristics in terms of approach. Over the course of one year, the research team visited congregations in Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Washington, D.C., urban areas where large populations of each religious faith have strong representation. Through exploratory conversations with young adults, religious leaders, and professionals working in religious institutions in each city, the team chose congregations within each religious tradition that represent a broad theological spectrum, from conservative to progressive. Each congregation also was chosen for the intergenerational participation of its members. Based on qualitative interviews and participant

observation, the team constructed profiles of Christian (Protestant and Catholic), Jewish, and Muslim congregations. The team spent several weeks collecting data at each of fifteen congregations, ultimately conducting approximately one hundred interviews with congregational leaders, lay leaders, and young adults.

They found six common themes, across religious traditions, which captured what young adults were seeking in a congregation and what congregations were doing to address their religious and spiritual needs.

1. ***Young adults want to feel that their presence is valued.*** Those who are interested in congregational life are aware that they are exceptional—they know that the majority of young adults are not interested in religious affiliation. As such, those who participate want to be acknowledged for their unusual commitment and interest. To show that young adults’ presence is valued, congregations:
 - facilitate regular intergenerational communication between congregational members, staff, and leadership
 - regularly and frequently show appreciation for young lay leaders
 - underwrite young adult activities as a way to acknowledge the importance of young adult participation.
 - hire a specific staff person to coordinate young adult programming.
 - provide physical space within the place of worship for young adult programs.
2. ***Young adults want a sense of ownership in their congregations.*** They value opportunities to assume leadership roles within their peer group and welcome chances to move into leadership in the larger congregation. To engender a sense of ownership, congregations:
 - enable young adults to create and plan their own events
 - create leadership positions for young adults both within their peer group and within the larger congregation
 - organize committees that are lay-led by young adults

3. ***Young adults' interests in religion are multifaceted.*** For some, their deep sense of belonging comes from being a part of a community. They want to connect with others who are also articulating a sense of self. Some young adults desire emotional support and guidance. Some want their religious group to be a place where they can develop their professional and support networks. Many single young adults participate in congregations in the hope of meeting a life partner. Many young adults want to learn about increasing their practice of tradition and rituals. Some seek to deepen their relationship with God. Some approach religion through the intellectual study of modern socio-historical texts or the religious canon. Others value the opportunity to effect social change with a group of people who share their values. Still other young adults seek a space for creative religious expression through music, art, writing, or dance. To acknowledge that young adults interests in religion are multifaceted, congregations:
- offer multiple points of entry: social, educational, spiritual, cultural, emotional, and theological
 - create multiple arenas for young adults to reflect upon and articulate their own religious identities
 - organize affinity groups so that the young adults can find like-minded peers
 - offer opportunities where young adults can sometimes engage as participants, and other times take on the responsibilities of leading
4. ***Young adults thrive when they are "met where they are."*** Young adults do not want to be judged for their level of religious practice or knowledge, nor feel ashamed by their lack of knowledge or practice. They want to approach religious practice focused on meaning and intention. While respecting the religious standards of the congregation and their religion at large, many took pride in making their own choices based on personal factors such as level of knowledge, peer group, and religious upbringing. To meet young adults where they are, congregations:
- offer learning opportunities directed specifically to young adults
 - explore and explain the congregation's (denomination's) theological framework through a learning process that is open to questioning
 - reduce fee structure so that participation is financially viable
5. ***Young adults welcome opportunities to feel emotionally affected.*** Young adults want to feel moved by music, a connection to their history, a sense of cultural heritage, and nostalgia. They want to be emotionally engaged and feel like a participant, not an audience member, at worship services. To produce an affective, or emotional, experience:
- religious leaders cultivate an atmosphere during worship services that enables young adults to be participants instead of audience members
 - leadership that is accessible and charismatic
 - congregation funds a charismatic and young staff person who can cultivate a community of young adults
6. ***Young adults respond to a theoretical and practical balance between the particular and the universal.*** Every individual interviewed acknowledged that there are many ways to believe in God and to live a religious life. Young adults appreciate an acknowledgement of the existence of individual differences such as class, race, gender, and sexual orientation. They do not want to feel cloistered from the outside world. Instead, they want to be able to share their spiritual interests with peers of different faiths. Through the articulation of similarities and differences, they deepen a sense of self as a member of their own faith. To create balance between the particular and the universal, congregations:
- focus on the thoughtful transmission of the theology and tradition of the particular congregation, not on theological debates (especially those that disparage other religious traditions or denominations).

- create an atmosphere that is self-consciously open and analytical: acknowledging the existence of individual differences such as class, race, gender, and sexual orientation
- facilitate interfaith and interdenominational exchange

The research team also found that young adults “exercised typical American individualism as they decided about associating with religious communities, sometimes participating in more than one simultaneously” (Belzer, et al., 106). The research team identified the following factors influencing young adult’s participation in a faith community:

- choosing a specific community, rather than committing to a larger denomination
- making choices based on a number of factors, such as interpersonal relationships, worship style, geographic location, opportunities for involvement, and accessibility of leadership
- deciding how often to attend and the extent of their participation
- choosing how much of the official teachings to accept and how much ritual observance to practice
- balancing their individual authority with their identity as members of a community and religious tradition
- seeking a community where there is both flexibility and structure
- being experientially engaged as opposed to a “show up and watch” style of religious participation
- building interpersonal relationships with people who express and explore their religious identities in similar ways; relationship building was a fundamental aspect of young adults’ congregational experience (Belzer, et al., 106-107)

In *Lost and Found: The Younger Unchurched and the Churches that Reach Them* Ed Stetzer, Richie Stanley, and Jason Hayes, report on the findings from three LifeWay Research projects, including a large scale survey of young adults and a survey of 149 churches that were reaching an extraordinary number of young adults. Based on the responses of young adults in the research studies, the research

team identified four markers of young adult ministry:

1. **Community** is vital to the emerging generations. For them, life is meant to be experienced together, and they sense a need to be involved in genuine relationships with others. They are looking for friends they can call for help when their tire is flat and people who will call and celebrate when they get a promotion. They want to walk through life with their friends. They have a need for people, and they show a deep desire for relational equity. In other words, they long to be deeply invested in others and have others deeply invested in them. They desire to be a major part of each other’s lives—the day-to-day, big and small “stuff of life.” They also think that others should be a part of the most important aspect of their lives—their spiritual journey.
2. **Depth** is important. Young adults want to be people of significance. Deep significance. They care about who they are and what they’re becoming—“ankle deep” doesn’t work for them. They told us that they’d rather be “in over their heads” in life as opposed to kicking around in the shallow end. Young adults also have interest in addressing the hard-to-talk about topics. They appreciate tough questions and despise pat answers. Their responses indicate that they like wrestling with difficult things and chewing on challenging ideas. They express a high degree of interest in processing information, and they often find the questions more important than the answers.
3. **Responsibility** is strongly valued because young adults know their choices make a difference. Decisions are everywhere. Recycle. Buy or trade fair. Sponsor a child. Respect your elders. Tithe. Love your neighbors. Respond to the crisis in Darfur. These are the type of opportunities that define this generation. They affirmed the importance of these issues, and they are committed to doing the “right” thing even as they grow in their understanding of what right means. They’ve concluded that all of

these decisions matter, and what matters most is how they respond.

4. **Connection** is the fourth area of importance. This could be called mentoring or intergenerational ministry. They want to learn from those who have already experienced the things they are about to face. They're looking for a connection with people who will walk alongside them and advise them. They want a connection that gives them the opportunity to have someone pour their lives into them and teach them along their journey. And interestingly enough, they're willing to do that for someone else too. (Stetzer, et al., 67-68)

These four markers of ministry, point to implications for developing faith formation and ministry with emerging adults. The young adults in the study, both churched and unchurched, expressed the following needs and interests:

- to interact with members of a group multiple times per week
- to participate in small group activities that promote relationships and belonging
- to connect with a mentor; to receive information and advice from individuals with experience
- to participate in Bible study that minimizes pat answers in the exploration of Scripture
- to participate in small group meetings to discuss life application of Scripture
- to determine their own beliefs through hands-on, practical learning experiences
- to utilize their talents and abilities through opportunities to meet needs
- to participate in hands-on outreach activities on a frequent basis that meet the needs of others
- to benefit others through global service projects

Based on their research with 149 churches that were reaching an extraordinary number of young adults, the research team found nine common characteristics in churches that are reaching young adults.

1. **Creating Deeper Community.** Churches that are effective at attracting and

developing young adults place a high value on moving people into a healthy small group system. Young adults are trying to connect and will make a lasting connection wherever they can find belonging.

2. **Making a Difference through Service.** Churches that are transforming young adults value leading people to serve through volunteerism. More than being pampered, young adults want to be part of something bigger than themselves and are looking to be part of an organization where they can make a difference through acts of service.
3. **Experiencing Worship.** Churches that are engaging young adults are providing worship environments that reflect their culture while also revering and revealing God. More than looking for a good performance, young adults desire to connect with a vertical experience of worship.
4. **Conversing the Content.** Churches that are led by authentic communicators are drawing young adults in the message. Though their styles vary from topic to exegetical, authentic communicators are true to their own personal style of communication and are usually more conversational than preachy.
5. **Leveraging Technology.** Churches that are reaching young adults are willing to communicate in a language of technology familiar to young adults. Young adults sense that these churches are welcoming churches that value and understand them, engaging them where they are.
6. **Building Cross-Generational Relationships.** Churches that are linking young adults with older, mature adults are challenging young adults to move on to maturity through friendship, wisdom, and support. Young adults are drawn to churches that believe in them enough to challenge them.
7. **Moving Toward Authenticity.** Churches that are engaging young adults are reaching them not only by their excellence but by their honesty. Young adults are looking for

and connecting to churches where they see leaders that are authentic, transparent, and on a learning journey.

8. **Leading by Transparency.** Churches that are influencing young adults highly value an incarnational approach to ministry and leadership. This incarnational approach doesn't require revealing one's personal sin list so much as it does require that those in leadership must be willing to express a personal sense of humanity and vulnerability.
9. **Leading by Team.** Increasingly churches reaching young adults seem to be taking a team approach to ministry. They see ministry not as a solo venture but as a team sport—and the broader participation it creates increases the impact of the ministry. (Stetzer, et al., 143-44)

Young adults are longing for community and fellowship with peers, looking for ways to reach people in need, and circling the church but not always finding a home in it. Connection is the key. Community with other young adults is extremely important in their lives. Young adults seek authentic answers in the Bible and Christian tradition, best learned through participation in small group meetings. Making a difference is essential by having the opportunity to meet the needs of others on a regular basis. Social action is cited as the major reason uninvolved young adults would consider being part of a church.

Works Cited

- Belzer, Tobin, Richard W. Flory, Nadia Roumani, and Brie Loskota. "Congregations That Get It: Understanding Religious Identities in the Next Generation." *Passing on the Faith: Transforming Traditions for the Next Generation of Jews, Christians, and Muslims*. James Heft, editor. New York: Fordham University Press, 2006.
- Flory, Richard W. and Donald E. Miller. *Finding Faith: The Spiritual Quest of the Post-Boomer Generation*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008.
- Stetzer, Ed, and Richie Stanley, and Jason Hayes. *Lost and Found: The Younger Unchurched and the Churches that Reach Them*. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009.

Part 2. Examples from Congregations

Part 2 presents a variety of congregational examples of faith formation with emerging adults. They are not presented as the best way to do faith formation with emerging adults, but rather as examples to help your church in developing or enhancing faith formation with emerging adults. You will see in these examples many of the key insights from the research studies in actual practice, such as the emphasis on community, small groups, engaging worship, service and mission, and substantive faith formation offerings. (For a review of additional practices and strategies for young adult faith formation consult the article, "Best Practices in Young Adult Faith Formation" in the Fall/Winter 2007 issue of *Lifelong Faith*. The article is online at: www.lifelongfaith.com/articles.htm.)

The following descriptions were developed from a review of recommended churches that are engaging young adults in faith formation and church life. Descriptions are drawn from each congregation's website. For more information use the provided website links. (Churches are listed alphabetically.)

■ 20something

North Coast Church, Vista, CA
(www.northcoastchurch.com)
(<http://northcoast20something.com>)

20something is a ministry of North Coast Church for single adults, ages 20 to 30, who seek to know God more through fellowship, study, and outreach. There are retreats, seasonal parties, and periodic outreach events to get out in the community and serve. There are regular activities from game nights to hikes and beach volleyball during the summer.

- **Growth Groups.** The center of the *20something* ministry are Growth Groups that meet weekly to cultivate deeper relationship with God and each other through sermon/book studies and prayer. Growth Groups meet weekly for quarter long sessions at the North Coast Church campus and in people's homes around North County. Most groups are co-ed and sermon-based,

but there are also groups just for women and men that focus on various topics. Most of the studies are based on the previous weekend's message. These "sermon-based" Growth Groups are built on a "Lecture-Lab" model. Imagine the weekend message as a lecture on Christian living, and the Growth Group as a lab where you get people discuss how the weekend's message works in real life. Each week there will be a series of Bible passages and questions on the back of the sermon note sheet to study before the meeting. It will usually take 20 to 40 minutes per week to complete the homework. (For an example see: www.northcoastchurch.com/index.php?id=140)

- **Sunday Night.** *zosomething* meets every Sunday night at 7:30 in the Canvas, North's Coast Church's coffee house on the Melrose Campus. It's a time to meet other *zosomething* people and hear about upcoming events. Most *zosomething* people attend North Coast Church's weekend service called "Last Call" at 6:00 pm in the Edge before heading over to *zosomething*.

■ **Kairos and Young Adult Ministry**
Brentwood Baptist Church, Nashville, TN
 (www.brentwoodbaptist.com/kairos)

- **Kairos** is a come-as-you-are Tuesday night worship experience geared toward energetic young adults who share a passion for growing together in the Word of God. Kairos is designed to challenge young adults on both a personal and spiritual level and teach them how to uniquely apply the scriptures to their life. Kairos provides a relaxed atmosphere to make new friends and enjoy the live music as young adults connect with a loving God who has a plan and purpose for your life.
- **Kairos Podcasts** contain the audio programs of the Kairos message each week.
- **Kairos Roots** is a deeper experience, using the same Kairos setup—complete with tables, chairs, and candles—there will be a time of worship and a message with a small group table discussion regarding the topic of the night as a part of the worship experience.

- **Intersect** groups provide opportunity for young adults to socialize, learn, and grow together with like-minded people in an authentic community that seeks to find and follow Christ. New groups start several times during the year on a wide variety of young adult relevant topics, for example: *Breathing New Life into Your Career*; *In a Pit with a Lion on a Snowy Day* (book study); *Life in the Journey Living Beyond Yourself*; *Me, Myself, and Lies*; *New to Fitness*; *Steps in Soul*; *TrueFaced*; *Unfamiliar Christianity*; *Unleashing Courageous Faith*; and *Your Bible Isn't Scary*.
- **Impact** is service to the local and global community with a variety of projects including providing beds for orphans and abandoned children in Haiti, Uganda, and Moldova; working at the Nashville Rescue Mission; and providing meals and supplies for the homeless.

Read more about Kairos in the book by pastor Mike Glenn: *In Real Time—Authentic Young Adult Ministry as it Happens* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009)

■ **Church of the Apostles**
Seattle, WA
 (www.apostleschurch.org)

Church of the Apostles is a young, emerging, Episcopal and Lutheran mission congregation—a future church with an ancient faith. The church's purpose is to *helpgodchangeeverything*, by participating in God's future, within today's culture and their local zip code, living and serving in intentional, sacramental community in the way of Jesus Christ.

- **Home Groups.** At Apostles, common life in Christ starts at home and among friends. God meets us where we live and wherever two or three come together in God's name to share in Christian community. The point is not just "going to a church," but being church in our daily lives and everyday interactions with others. Home groups gather in actual houses, but also in other kinds of spaces. Some groups meet in coffeehouses, others in pubs and some in

parks or at the beach. The spaces vary, but the purpose is the same: small cells of people (followers and seekers) gathering weekly or every other week to share life, tell stories, eat meals, pray, serve and grow together in Jesus Christ. Each group has its own vibe, way of gathering and basic path. Some groups are on a cognitive path (studying the Bible and deepening knowledge), some are on an expressive path (making music, creating art or writing poetry) some are on a communitarian path around a lifestyle or common interest (young moms, hikers, AA recovery). Some are on a contemplative path (gathering for evening prayers or spiritual exercises), while others are on an active path (working soup kitchens, tutoring kids, building houses). Although they may take up different activities, each group is an expression of church and will therefore take time to worship, pray, reflect on scripture and engage in a group ministry in the world.

- **Service.** Doing justice and showing mercy is core to the DNA of Christian life. What distinguished the early Christians from the surrounding society (and fueled the growth of the church) was just and merciful living, steeped in love for Jesus Christ. People took notice of how Christians cared for “orphans and widows in their distress” and kept themselves from being jaded by the ways of the world. This same love of justice and kindness is Christian spiritual formation of the highest order. We are called to actively serve poor, oppressed, hungry, sick and needy people, not to earn brownie points with God (not possible), but to live into and share with others the justice and mercy that God continues to rain upon the world in Christ. As we practice the justice and mercy we have already received from God, like water over rocks. God is slowly transforming us into just and merciful people. Apostles Mission Dei Group coordinates a different local service project each month, as well as coordinating out of state or country projects once or twice per year, so consider getting involved in one of these, as you are led by the Spirit, to share in the Missio Dei (mission of God).

- **Sunday Mass.** Smaller groups of apostles that meet at various times during the week for community groups, prayer, scripture reflection and service, come together each week for Mass. At Mass we immerse ourselves in the ways of God, and discern what God is doing in us and in our world, as we attend to God’s Word (Jesus Christ whose story is told in bible readings and a message), the world (prayer and offering) and share the bread and wine of communion at Table. All this, so we can go home (sending forth to mission). Apostles’ worship is neither “traditional” nor “contemporary” but ancient-future. Ancient-future liturgy speaks across generations and draws equally upon ancient (hymns, chant, candles, communion) and techno-modern (alt. rock, art, ambient, projection, video) sources, so there is no need to ‘check your culture at the door.’ so, come as you are, wear your jeans, show your body art, tote your java, and be at home spiritually, with God, and among friends.
- **Events.** A variety of other activities include a Supper Club, a Theology Pub every other Tuesday night, Soul Café, and Film Nights.

■ **Contemporary Roman Catholics (CRC)
Holy Trinity Church, New York City**
(www.crcnyc.org)

The Holy Trinity Contemporary Roman Catholics (CRC) is a dynamic group of young adults dedicated to providing social interaction, community service, and spiritual growth. CRC offers many ways to get involved. It’s an opportunity for young adults to meet like-minded Catholic young adults, to help those less fortunate through community service programs, and to enrich their spiritual journey, no matter where they are along the way. CRC offers community forums, spiritual groups, and retreats to help deepen faith.

- **Weekly Mass and Gathering.** Each week following the 5:30 Mass at Holy Trinity, the CRC group goes out to an area bar or restaurant to socialize.
- **New Members Only Group Dinner.** Regular dinners that make it easy for young

adults to come out in a casual setting with other new members to network, socialize, and learn more about CRC.

- **CRC Book Club.** A gathering at a CRC member's home to discuss a book, with light dinner and drinks served.
- **Events.** Events include Broadway shows and plays, visits to art museums, "Taste of the Upper West Side" food festival, and the CRC Spiritual and Recreational Camping Retreat.

■ The Crossing

St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Boston, MA
(www.thecrossingboston.org)

The Crossing is a community that seeks to walk in the life-changing, world-changing Way of Jesus, sharing the love, hope, beauty and justice of God in the city of Boston. Everybody is welcome to join as we gather for transformative worship, spiritual practice, and authentic community; as we fuse the wisdom and mystery of ancient traditions with that of urban mystics, artists and activists; and as we move out to join God in healing, freeing and blessing all people, communities and the earth.

- **Worship.** Every Thursday from 6-7:30 pm at St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, be ready for a transformative encounter with God that makes you act a bit different in the world. Here's what we share: 1) R&B grooves laid out under monastic chant, gospel, spirituals and Episcopal hymns, 2) silence and intentional spiritual practice as part of worship, 3) reflections on the gospel, usually led by a lay person, plus some brief talk-back time, 4) open space to catch your breath and let God's word sink in, 5) Eucharist (or communion) with a groove, where everybody is welcome to celebrate the mystery of Jesus alive among us, 6) post-worship: crank the stereo and share snacks and community, 7) post-post worship: usually a field trip to a local restaurant for very cheap food or a potluck with community formation.

• **Small Groups and Formation.**

Sundays @ The Crossing

- Every Sunday @ 3-4:30 pm: An Intro to the Episcopal Church
- 1st Sundays, 5-7:30: Artist Expressions
- 2nd Sundays, 5-7:30: Bible Study
- 3rd Sundays, 5-7:30: Crossing Community Dinners
- 4th Sundays, 5-7:30: Bible Study

During the Week

- Monday-Wednesday Evenings: Neighborhood Action/Reflection Groups (justice and service action/reflection), and Covenant Groups (small discipleship circles centered around prayer and stories, 4-6 people per group)
- Thursdays after Worship: Dancing with Jesus (monthly) and Everybody Does Theology (monthly)

- **Rule of Life.** The Crossing is a community of sisters and brothers offering a compassionate, progressive, creative, generous, radically welcoming expression of God's life and love in the city of Boston. From that community has grown this Rule of Life, which like the Rule of a monastic community spells out our commitment to discipleship. We believe we are called to follow in the footsteps of the ancients and live the way of Jesus: nurturing God's Spirit in and among us; gathering everybody for prayer and celebration at God's table; bearing the good news of hope and resurrection into the world; and spreading God's mission of healing and transformation. But we know we cannot live this dream alone. We need each other. We need authentic, concrete spiritual practices that form our lives in the shape of Jesus' life. We need to make real commitments to God and to each other as we journey together closer to the heart of God and to the deepest callings on our own lives. This Rule for Real Life describes a way of walking together, and following Jesus together and making something extraordinary, holy and whole of our daily, ordinary (seemingly) individual lives. (See: www.thecrossingboston.org/Rule_of_Life.pdf)

- **Justice and Service.**
 - The Hope in Action Campaign: a young adult justice effort led by Relational Evangelists at eight ministries throughout the Boston area to develop programs of public service and social justice based on the needs and interests of the community.
 - Monday Lunch Program at the Cathedral
 - Boston Faith and Justice Network: build awareness, relationships and action around fair trade and justice issues, locally and globally
 - St. Francis House: prepare and serve meals everyday
 - Haley House: soup kitchen, food pantry and clothing room, bakery café and corner shop, youth culinary classes, noonday farm
 - Ecclesia Ministries: social services to homeless people in concert with spiritual companionship and community

■ **Generation Axis**
Willow Creek Community Church
South Barrington, IL
 (www.generationaxis.com)

- **Missional Community Hubs** are the epicenter of Willow Creek Church's ministry with emerging adults. These are community-based out of someone's house, apartment, or condo throughout the Chicago-land area. They exist to bring redemptive change to their neighborhoods through gatherings, serving initiatives, social events, and discipleship opportunities. This is where life happens in Axis and their dream is see Missional Community Hubs launched all over our city.
- **Life Transformation Groups** are seasonal, gender-based groups of 3-4 people that seek to live out the teachings of Jesus in intimate community with focuses on Scripture, prayer, and accountability. These communities are generally born out of relationships within an Missional Community Hub.
- The **Axis Experience** is the place where the entire Axis community gathers for prayer,

worship, and to celebrate what has happened in their Missional Community Hubs. This provides the opportunity to connect with each other around our shared language, vision, and values.

- **Generation Axis Videos** on Vimeo: stories, devotions, Bible study, promotion. (<http://vimeo.com/channels/generationsaxistv>)

■ **Marble Connection**
Marble Collegiate Church, New York City
 (www.marblechurch.org/Programs/20sand30s/tabid/100/Default.aspx)

Led by the spirit of Jesus, **Connection** is a faith-guided family of young adults who pursues the highest levels of love, compassion, and service through engagement with the world and one another. To live in the Way of Jesus, we do five things: worship, pray, be in relationship with others, learn, and serve.

- **Sundays: Worship & Fellowship** (11 am – 1:30 pm). Sunday morning is the touchstone. Sunday morning worship is followed by an hour of spiritual conversation and fellowship. In the Sunday Conversations young adults to get to know each other and share their faith and what matters in their lives, over a light brunch.
- **Prayer:** People are invited to go deeper into communion with God through prayer—whether they have an active prayer life or have never once prayed. Many Marble Connection members are prayer partners; people pray for one another.
- **Relationships:** Through a variety of fun activities and nights out on the town (New York City), young adults can meet new people and deepen friendships.
- **Learning:** Marble Connection has several different ways for young adults to feed their minds: Bible study, small groups, or the Marble Curriculum (an adult education program). Young Adult Bible Study takes place on Wednesday nights after Wednesday worship.
- **Service:** Connection members volunteer together but much of their service is

performed in everyday life. Spring mission trips allow people to take an active role in give to the local community.

■ **Newsong Third Culture Community Irvine, CA**

(www.newsong.net)

(<http://irvine.newsong.net/ministries/lifestage/youngadults>)

Newsong's Young Adult Ministry exists to transform the world by empowering young adults in their 20's-30's to be radical in their love for God and for people. There are four main elements of young adult ministry:

- **Young Adult Small Groups.** Small Groups meet once a week and live out the 3rd culture values of loving, learning and serving (through Bible studies, cultivating relationships, serving the community together). The groups consist of 7-20 people depending on which group you decide to commit to.
- **Momentum Nights.** Momentum is an event that happens once a month where people connect meaningfully with one another and with God and take steps forward in living out their faith in community. This takes a variety of forms. Some nights this has meant a speaker who delves into a topic relevant to young adults and on other nights this translates into inviting local musicians to come share their art in a café type setting.
- **Travel with a Purpose.** Travel to local and global destinations to experience culture, learn, serve and live in community for a week. These *Travel with a Purpose* trips take place twice a year for young adults to use their vacation time in a unique way.
- **Service.** Each person is carefully created with unique experiences, pains, gifting, and calling. At Newsong there are many ways to love, learn, and serve. To help people make a difference a FLOW Consult can help people recognize God's unique shaping and calling on their life. FLOW helps people find the passion that God has placed in your heart and bring it to life. Discovery is important but each person's journey is different. There

isn't a program or process that fits everyone and that is why it is important for a FLOW consultant to serve as a sounding board to provide a fresh perspective as people tell their stories. They identify obstacles in a person's path and resources to encourage growth.

In addition to these four elements there are also:

- **Message Study Guides** (and audio and video podcasts) provide a way for people dig deeper into the weekly message from worship gatherings. Each study incorporates questions that will help you examine Bible text, apply scripture to daily life, and put your faith into action. These studies can be used for small groups or individuals.
- **Connections Dinner** is a non-threatening and fun way to learn about Newsong and to meet several members of the pastoral staff. This introduction to Newsong provides an opportunity to meet new members and share the genesis of the Newsong church community and its vision and how people can participate in the life of Newsong.
- **Foundations—Beginning the Journey** is a six week class that explores the basics of what it means to be a Christ follower. **Foundations—The Bible** helps people discover what the Bible is all about and learn tools to dig into the Bible for themselves.
- **Justice N.O.W.** is a Night of Worship and music dedicated to bringing light to global issues of injustice that need immediate attention. By catching God's heart for justice through meeting God in passionate worship, people the call to a life of justice

■ **St. Lydia's Dinner Church, New York City** (www.stlydias.org)

If there's one thing that ties the folks at St. Lydia's together, it's the type of church experience that allows young adults to explore spiritual practice and theology in a deep and rich way while embracing the ambiguity, doubt, and questions that are a part of our spiritual lives.

St. Lydia's looks and feels different from most churches. St. Lydia's is a Dinner Church! People

gather each week to cook a big, delicious meal together. Worship occurs around that meal—people eat together, read scripture, pray and sing around the table. They do this because this is what worship looked like in the earliest days of the church. They believe that Communion is made around a table where people share food and themselves. St. Lydia's is a new experiment in what the Church might be when the meal we share is at the very center of our life together.

■ **St. Vincent de Paul Church**
San Francisco, CA
(www.svdpsf.org/youngadults)

The Young Adult Group at St. Vincent's is a community of young adults in their 20's and 30's who value socializing, volunteering and exploring questions of their faith with others who share a similar Catholic heritage and value system. Their mission is to promote a spiritual, social, and service oriented community for Catholics in their 20s and 30s. The core events of our group take place on the second and fourth Monday nights of each month. Many young adults also gather for Mass on Sunday at 5:15 pm and social and service activities take place on a weekly basis.

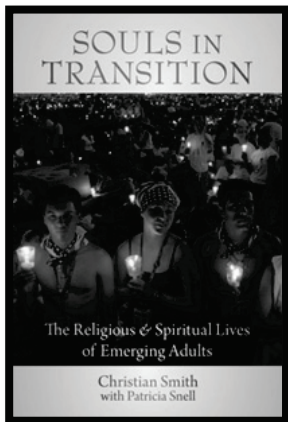
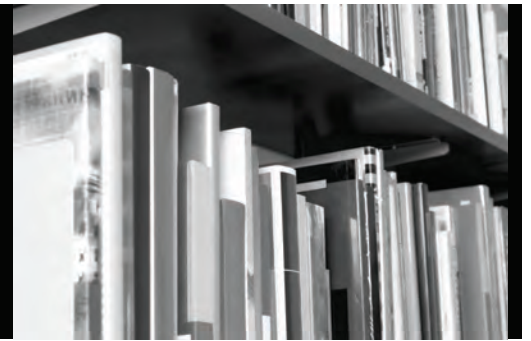
- **Monday events** are the foundation of the young adult community, meeting every second and fourth Monday to explore faith and values in a fun relaxed atmosphere, get details on upcoming social and community service activities, and make a few new friends. Whether young adults are rejoining the church after a long absence, want to learn more about Catholicism, or just meet other Catholics who value their faith and heritage, the Monday events are for them. Every meeting features a new topic and speaker. Generally, most of our topics center around questions and issues facing young adult Catholics in the world today.
- **Service projects** include regular commitments to a retirement community, delivery of food to the homeless, cooking at the soup kitchen, as well as special projects in the community.
- **Annual Retreat** provides an opportunity for reflection, spiritual renewal, fellowship, and

more. Desired outcomes for the retreat include: taking an inventory of one's life, exploring one's passions purpose in life, discerning what God is calling one to do, gaining insight and encouragement from others' experiences, increasing alignment between one's values and actions, and building relationships with other young adults.

- **Small Faith Groups** bring together young adult Catholics to deepen their faith and love of God while fostering fellowship and deepening the ties with the St. Vincent De Paul community. The format involves reflecting on the Sunday's gospel reading with questions to guide people in delving deeper into the scripture and applying it to their lives. Typically, groups decide to meet every three weeks on Sunday evening after our 5:15 pm Mass. The meetings take place at one of the groups member's houses in what often will end up being a pot-luck dinner format. The facilitator or small faith community leader is generally rotated. Groups form after the Annual Retreat, and tend to last a minimum of six months and often times longer.

Resources

Emerging Adulthood & Faith Formation



Souls in Transition: The Religious & Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults

Christian Smith with Patricia Snell (New York: Oxford U. Press, 2009) [\$24.95]

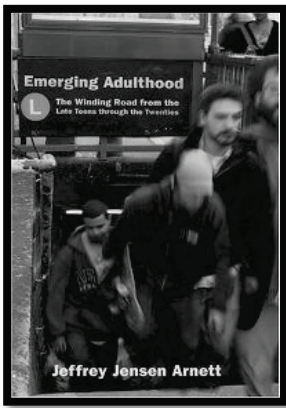
How important is religion for young people in America today? What are the major influences on their developing spiritual lives? How do their religious beliefs and practices change as young people enter into adulthood? Christian Smith's *Souls in Transition* explores these questions and many others as it tells the definitive story of the religious and spiritual lives of emerging adults, ages 18 to 23, in the U.S. today. This is the follow-up study to the landmark book, *Soul Searching*. Based on interviews with thousands of young people tracked over a five-year period, *Souls in Transition* reveals how the religious practices of the teenagers portrayed in *Soul Searching* have been strengthened, challenged, and often changed as they have moved into adulthood. The book describes the broader cultural world of today's emerging adults, how that culture shapes their religious outlooks, and what the consequences are for religious faith and practice in America more generally. Some of Smith's findings are surprising. Parents turn out to be the single most important influence on the religious outcomes in the lives of young adults. On the other hand, teenage participation in evangelization missions and youth groups does not predict a high level of religiosity just a few years later. The common wisdom that religiosity declines sharply during the young adult years is shown to be greatly exaggerated. Painstakingly researched and filled with remarkable findings, *Souls in Transition* will be essential reading for everyone who wishes to know how religious practice is affected by the transition into adulthood in America today.



Lost and Found: The Younger Unchurched and the Churches that Reach Them

Ed Stetzer, Richie Stanley, Jason Hayes (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009) [\$17.99]

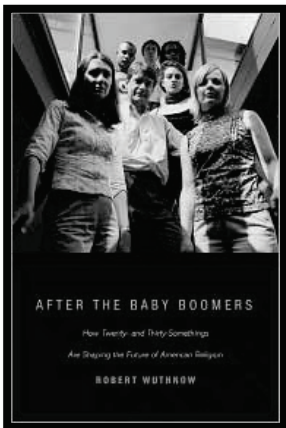
In *Lost and Found* the research team analyzes three Lifeway Research studies to identify four types of unchurched young adults in their 20s and four key markers of young adult ministry: community, depth of content, social responsibility, and cross-generational connections. *Lost and Found* also researches 149 churches that are reaching extraordinary numbers of young adults by paying close attention to the four key markers identified in the research. The stories and insights from these churches will provide direction for churches to develop faith formation that develops authentic faith in Christ among emerging adults.



Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties

Jeffrey Jensen Arnett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) [\$21.95]

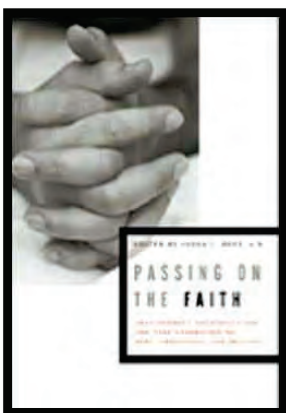
Recently the lives of people from age 18 to 29 have changed so dramatically that a new stage of life has developed, emerging adulthood, that is distinct from both the adolescence that precedes it and the young adulthood that comes in its wake. Rather than marrying and becoming parents in their early twenties, most people in industrialized societies now postpone these transitions until at least their late twenties, and instead spend the time in self-focused exploration as they try out different possibilities in their careers and relationships. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett identifies and labels, for the first time, this period of exploration, instability, possibility, self-focus, and a sustained sense of being in limbo. Marrying later and exploring more casual sexual relationships have created different hopes and fears concerning long-term commitments and the differences between love and sex. In contrast to previous portrayals of emerging adults, Arnett's research shows that they are particularly skilled at maintaining contradictory emotions—they are confident while still being wary, and optimistic in the face of large degrees of uncertainty.



After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion

Robert Wuthnow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) [\$29.95]

Robert Wuthnow has produced an essential and important resource for understanding the lifestyles and beliefs of young adults and the impact they are having on religion. Wuthnow interprets new evidence from scores of in-depth interviews and surveys to answer the questions: What are their churchgoing habits and spiritual interests and needs? How does their faith affect their families, their communities, and their politics? Wuthnow devotes chapters to examining seven key trends in the world of young adults, who participates in congregations, recent trends in religious beliefs, spirituality and spiritual practices, faith and family, religion and public life, ethnic diversity, religious uses of the internet, and vital congregations. This book is filled with information, analysis, and implications that can shape the church's ministry with young adults for years to come.



Passing on the Faith: Transforming Traditions for the Next Generation of Jews, Christians, and Muslims

Edited by James Heft, S.M. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006) [\$22]

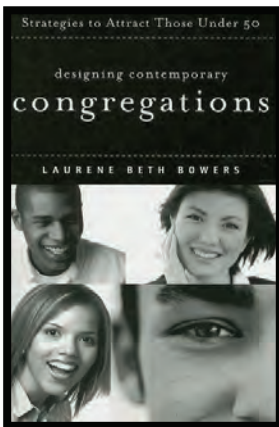
Passing on the Faith: Transforming Traditions for the Next Generation of Jews, Christians, and Muslims is an important new book that is the result of a 2004 international conference at USC, "Faith, Fear and Indifference: Constructing the Religious Identity of the Next Generation." The book includes original essays by international scholars that explore the challenges of passing on faith today, summary reports on three recent national studies of youth and young adults, and direction for passing on faith to the next generations of Jews, Christians, and Muslims. The report on new research on young adults conducted at USC, "Congregations that Get It," is especially helpful.



Finding Faith: The Spiritual Quest of the Post-Boomer Generation

Richard Flory and Donald E. Miller (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008) [\$19.95]

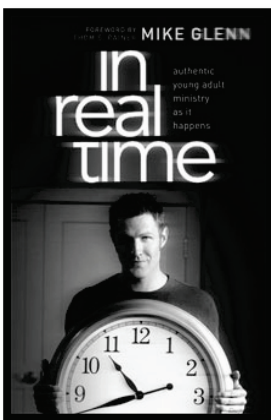
Sociologists Richard Flory and Donald E. Miller argue that we are on the verge of another potential revolution in how Christians worship and associate with one another. Just as the formative experiences of Baby Boomers were colored by such things as the war in Vietnam, the 1960s, and a dramatic increase in their opportunities for individual expression, so Post-Boomers have grown up in less structured households with working (often divorced) parents. These childhood experiences leave them craving authentic spiritual experience, rather than entertainment, and also cause them to question institutions. Flory and Miller develop a typology that captures four current approaches to the Christian faith and argue that this generation represents a new religious orientation of “expressive communalism,” in which they seek spiritual experience and fulfillment in community and through various expressive forms of spirituality.



Designing Contemporary Congregations: Strategies to Attract Those Under 50

Laune Beth Bowers (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2008) [\$14]

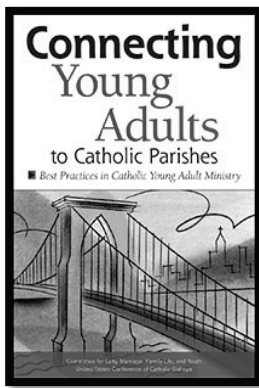
One of the reasons the traditional church is still struggling to attract the postmodern generation is because it also needs to be a contemporary congregation—in touch with culture and its current trends. Laune Beth Bowers identifies strategies to contemporize worship, fellowship, evangelism, social justice, rituals, and equipping the disciples for ministry. She says that designing healthy contemporary congregations can be achieved in three ways: 1) blending traditional with contemporary trends; 2) producing “karmic balance,” as defined by Jesus (“the measure you give will be the measure you get”); and 3) allowing culture to influence organized religion in order to strengthen the connection between the two and to make them mutually receptive to the influence of the other.



In Real Time: Authentic Young Adult Ministry as It Happens

Mike Glenn (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009) [\$12.99]

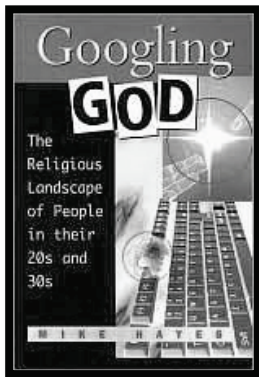
As the need for relevant young adult ministry programs increases, the best example of a successful one in action today is Kairos, a weekly worship gathering of more than one thousand young single and married people in Nashville. In *Real Time* tells the story of how this ministry unfolded, and its overriding message is one that churches everywhere can take to heart and apply. Mike Glenn is the senior pastor of Brentwood Baptist Church where he also leads Kairos. “Young adults are serious about life. They want basic and straight,” writes Glenn. “In the church, we have thought people were bored with the basic message, but in fact, they have never heard the gospel at all.”



Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes

Committee for Laity, USCCB (Washington: USCCB Publishing, 2010) [\$24.95]

Create a young adult friendly parish using the wisdom, insight, and examples from the authors in this unique book. This resource highlights how to do ministry with the young adults who are already present in the life of your parish. This text builds on the vision of the Catholic bishops' pastoral statement *Sons and Daughters of the Light* to motivate parish leaders to draw young adults into the life of the community and receive the gifts that they bring. Chapters cover a wide range of topics in young adult ministry: prayer and spirituality, catechesis, discernment and vocation, community life, pastoral care, evangelization, liturgy, justice and service, families, Hispanic/Latino perspectives, and forming faith communities.



Googling God: The Religious Landscape of People in their 20s and 30s

Mike Hayes (New York: Paulist Press, 2007) [\$17.95]

Mike Hayes, the managing editor of BustedHalo.com and associate director of Paulist Young Adult Ministries, explores ministry with Millennials by examining who are young adults, what is working well in young adult ministry, and practical strategies for addressing the needs of young adults

Emerging Adulthood Research – Online Sources

- American Millennials: Generations Apart—Religion.* Marist College Institute for Public Opinion and the Knights of Columbus.
- www.kofc.org/un/cmfr/resources/Communications/documents/poll_mil_religion.pdf
- Between Two Worlds: How Young Latinos Come of Age in America.* Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next. Pew Hispanic Center
- <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1438/young-latinos-coming-of-age-in-america>
- Changing SEA: The Changing Spirituality of Emerging Adults.* Includes 15 essays on topics related to the lives of emerging adults, written by scholars, and an ethnographic investigation that explores: What kinds of churches do emerging adults attend? Why do they go? How involved are they? How do churches engage emerging adults in meaningful ways?
- www.changingsea.org
- Confident. Connected. Open to Change.* Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next, Pew Research Center .
- <http://pewresearch.org/millennials>

- Jeffrey Arnett Emerging Adult Website.*
- www.jeffreyarnett.com/index.htm
- The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation.* Lifeway Research Center
- <http://www.lifeway.com/menu/200767>
- Millennial Study Captures Snapshot of Young America.* Newshour, PBS (Video)
- www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/social_issues/jan-june10/millennials_02-24.html
- MIT Young Adult Development Project.*
- <http://hrweb.mit.edu/worklife/youngadult/index.html>
- The Network on Transitions to Adulthood.*
- <http://www.transad.pop.upenn.edu/>
- Religion Among the Millennials.* Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next. Pew Research Center
- <http://pewforum.org/Age/Religion-Among-the-Millennials.aspx>.

At the 2015 Adult Faith Formation Symposium participants were guided through a scenario planning process to create four scenarios for the future of adult faith formation in congregations and to design strategies for using the scenarios to design new initiatives and projects in adult faith formation.Â "Faith and Spirituality among Emerging Adults" by Penny Edgell "Religion & the Millennial Generation: Insights from the Latest Research" "Religious Trajectories from the Teenage Years into the Emerging Adult Years" by Christian Smith "Young Adults in a Changing Church" by Shannyn Magee "Emerging Adult Participation in Congregations" by Conrad Hackett "Faith Formation with Emerging Adults: Congregational Practices" Download Volume 4.2. View Faith Formation Research Papers on Academia.edu for free.Â This article frames important issues in young adult ministry and explores potential responses, including concrete examples. Bookmark. Download. by Kyle Oliver. â€¢ 5. Emerging Adulthood, Faith Formation, Church Growth, Faith Development Theory. Crowley, "Using New Eyes": Photography as a Spiritual Practice for Faith Formation and Worship in TEACHING THEOLOGY & RELIGION 18, no. 4 (October 2015). This article presents three cases of how Lutheran groups used photography as a spiritual practice in processes that led to group spiritual reflection for faith formation and worship: a photo