



21st Century Ministry with Youth?

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st 21 Century Ministry with Youth?

A lot of churches throughout this Presbytery often share with me the same message: “We simply don’t have any youth in our church these days.” For many of these congregations, there is some truth to this statement. Many of our congregations are older and diminishing in numbers. The **Good News**, however, is that despite the age or size of your congregation, youth ministry can be thriving with EACH AND EVERY CHURCH within this Presbytery. ‘Youth ministry’ as we knew it (young people who have been baptized and raised as future members of our church) in the 21st Century is changing. The TRUTH is that youth ministry exists whenever Christians are ministering with young people—THAT’S IT. There is nothing in the Book of Order, or the Confessions, or even the Bible that says that in order for churches to have youth ministry, the young people must have been raised in the church, and we must have a paid youth director. I’m not offering a ‘miracle diet’ or a miracle program. By no means can we guarantee ‘30 day youth ministry’. But what I am offering is some food for thought.

What I’m alluding to is what many within ministry call MISSIONAL ministry. It means opening the doors of your church, and GETTING OUT INTO THE NEIGHBORHOOD. This is not just for young people, but people of all ages.

With that thinking in mind, here are some thoughts and questions to get your church talking:

- **Who are the young people in your neighborhood?** What are their names? Where do they live? Who is in their families? There are A LOT more than you may think!
- **Which schools are within your community?** Who are the staff members and faculty? Are any young people home schooled?
- **What are the needs of the young people in your community?** Not just church needs like Bible knowledge, but what are the basic needs of your young people (food, a place to gather, sports, tutoring)?

- **Are there ongoing programs or events that you could partner with?** No need to reinvent the wheel; join up with others to see how things are done.
- **Are there any individuals who are currently involved with your church who seem energized by these conversations?** They may be good people to approach about joining this ministry!
- **What does your church budget look like?** How much is designated for youth ministry? Maybe that should change! It doesn’t cost much to buy a few pizzas every now and again, or put up a basketball hoop!
- **What resources can your church family offer?** It may not be a fitness center or trips around the world, but you DO have resources: talented people, buildings, mission money, and JESUS.

PLEASE NOTE: I did not mention ONE thing about social media. While this can be a form of ministry, this is a huge topic and is for another conversation. Jesus didn’t need Facebook!



Youth Ministry in the 21st Century is about showing the love of God to all young people within your community; not just those that show up on Sundays. With enough courage and creativity, ANY congregation can have a dynamic youth ministry. Please keep in mind: we’re not talking about youth ministry as a means to church membership (although sometimes this happens). We’re talking about ministry for the sake of the Gospel: to share the gracious love of God in Christ Jesus— that’s it. Is that enough?

If you have any questions or comments about youth ministry, I would LOVE to meet with your church to discuss what ministry may look like within your community. Rev. Jeff Binder: rev.binder@gmail.com; 434.845.1754. Also be sure to

stay up to date with all of the opportunities that the Presbytery offers. We have year-round programming for all ages!