



Finding home

Five ways congregations and young adults get it wrong when trying to find a match made in heaven

Congregations find young adults as elusive as the World Series pennant Chicago Cubs fans dream about. In the meantime, young adults bemoan the congregations they visit, wishing for a combination of Starbucks, TED talks, and the American Red Cross. It's no wonder that the two groups stumble past each other.

Worship

Young adults get it wrong when they trust Burger King's "have it your way" message. Fast-changing technologies and fashions may succeed in catering to our every passing appetite, but God alone is the One whose depths cannot be sounded and who answers our deepest desires. Worship that lacks this "deep calling to deep" leaves us adrift.

Congregations get it wrong when they discount what God is already doing among the people who come to worship. They'd often prefer to preserve tradition rather than join those through whom God is breathing new life into dry bones.

Fellowship

Young adults get it wrong when they expect other church members to be perfect Barbie and Ken role models. Christians are imperfect people, in all stages of life, who gather to learn and to grow in their faith. We extend mercy and grace one to another amid celebration and struggle.

Congregations get fellowship wrong when they see it as an elite social club. Focusing on frivolous entertainment, they ignore the importance of making meaningful

connections with people of different life stages and backgrounds.

Mission/service

Young adults get it wrong when they confuse church missions and services with volunteering with AmeriCorps. They miss the importance of Jesus as the reason for service and evangelism.

Congregations get it wrong when they target specific groups to increase attendance. They often throw money at a problem rather than get to know the people involved. Service without relationships does not bring lasting change.

Leadership

Young adults get it wrong when they feel entitled to leadership roles but are more committed to fantasy football or Pinterest boards than to the church. They should serve on committees or find other ways to use their gifts. They should be challenged to give at least the equivalent of their cell phone data package payment to the church.

Congregations get it wrong when they say they want leaders of the future but don't allow young adults to grow into leadership. They should provide young adults with opportunities to use their gifts. By relegating groups to specific parts of church life, we lose part of the vision of who God is. The qualifications for working with youth are not necessarily being young and hip.

Context

Young adults get it wrong when they expect congregations to be on the cutting edge of technology or to use

every social media platform but themselves show little regard for face-to-face interaction.

Congregations get it wrong when they forget their purpose. In clinging to the golden calves in our traditions, neglecting to bridge a 2,000-year-old gospel to a contemporary church and its media, or attempting to follow every cultural trend, we allow lesser things to displace Christ from his rightful place at the center of our life together.

Finding home

As we search for and look to create home, may God continue to grant us all the grace and peace necessary to work together to build communities that reflect heaven on earth.



One of the AmeriCorps VISTA interns with the Presbyterian Hunger Program adds her prayer to this congregation's mailbox-turned-prayerbox.