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180° Symposium 2024 Focus Group—Practitioners

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180° SYMPOSIUM 2024

FOCUS GROUP—PRACTITIONERS

The Next BIG Thing

What's Coming Next In Youth Ministry

PARTICIPANTS: David Kim, chair; Tamara Bennet, Steve Case, Isaac Catambatam, Khai Kahi Cin, Elliott, Alfred Kilembe, Mary Kobimbo, Nahum Mendez, Jiwan Moon, Althea Truman, and Say Pazaw Wah (Zoom attendee).

KEY POINTS FOR “UNIQUELY SDA YOUTH MINISTRY”

1. Vibrant church socials in traditional cultures (e.g. Jamaica) that involve youth all day on Sabbath. Continued emphasis on MV or JMV or AY, Pathfinder and camporee programs. These programs give youth a sense of belonging and ownership and, in some cases, mission. In North America some of these programs no longer exist, for better or worse.
2. Education (schools) and, in some cases, health systems reinforce SDA-ness.
3. Importance of giving youth opportunities to encounter and exercise their faith (short-term/local mission trips, service to neighbors, service to the community).
4. Second Coming concept for youth. There is a need for the urgency of and preparation for the imminent return of Christ.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR “UNIQUELY SDA YOUTH MINISTRY”

1. Rediscover church social programs that nurture youth and that give a sense of belonging.
2. Encourage familiarity with Bible stories and the skill to tell their own stories (use online NAD resources and Bible story apps).

3. Emphasize “the kingdom of God is at hand”: Equip youth to internalize this idea as a positive/blessed/joyous way of living that embodies the characteristics of the Remnant. This would encompass caring for others, empathy toward the suffering of others (grief, pain, trauma), serving the community, sharing one’s faith story in a way that shares Jesus, and utilizing all avenues (in-person and online, social media, YouTube, video conferencing, etc.).
4. Create signature service events at the Conference/Union/NAD level (i.e., Global Youth Day, Day of Service, Total Member Involvement emphasis) that encourage an other-focused mission mindset.

KEY POINTS FOR “IMMIGRANT MINISTRY AND CULTURAL CHALLENGES”

1. Recognition of tension between emphasizing and allowing culturally distinct groups (ethno-centric silos) vs unification under the Christian culture (multicultural big tent).
2. Immigrant ministry must recognize a complicated global context: people entering North America, people not yet allowed to enter North America, people of country A voluntarily moving to country B, people fleeing country A to country B, people from country A brought forcibly to countries B, C, D. Immigrant ministry meets the 3 R’s: Refuge, Resources, Respect (Dr. Paquini).

3. Immigrant ministry is being an advocate for those recently arrived: Refugees in prison, developing friendships, supporting language needs, and hearing their plight.
4. Resist seeing immigrants as threats (nationalism) and resist requiring immigrants to conform (Mosaic view of cultural plurality rather than a melting pot view of cultural assimilation).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR “IMMIGRANT MINISTRY AND CULTURAL CHALLENGES”

1. Entreat administrators to support immigrant workers/students through church policy and regulatory/government policy to help immigrants become established in North America.
2. From the conference level, engage in listening to the experiences and needs of immigrant groups/churches and provide resources to help them establish a supportive community for themselves and other immigrants/refugees/displaced people groups.
3. Encourage language familiarity and support both for immigrant groups as well as “host” groups. Language encourages mutual understanding and the building of community.
4. Encourage immigrants to see themselves as a valid part of society with valuable distinctives to offer to the mainstream society. Encourage immigrants to see themselves as missionaries.
5. Enlist youth (who are best equipped to do this) in changing the perceptions of the mainstream society toward immigrants by contributing to the “mosaic” and therefore, transforming culture.

KEY POINTS FOR “VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, AND RETENTION”

1. The problematic issue of gatekeeping (by age, perceived experience, appearance, etc.) to determine who gets to be a leader in the church.
2. There is a real need for creating a safe space (through vetting, background checking, etc.) but young people need opportunities to learn and experience working with and through the

Holy Spirit (Protestant view of empowering all people for service).

3. There is a need to assess the dominant “system” in place to see if it is promoting or hindering discipleship. This question is embodied in the process of discipleship (recruit, train, retain).
4. Risk being messy; Jesus sent out inexperienced disciples. Let God be the program director. Practice enlisting Spirit-empowered people, not merely institution-empowered recruiting.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR “VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, AND RETENTION”

1. Instruct youth ministry directors (at the institution level) to observe and recognize what is going on at the local church level (organic movement of Spirit-empowered volunteers) and provide appropriate resources and guidance where needed or requested.
2. Invest in a mentoring paradigm that can be implemented broadly within a conference, union, or NAD level, that encourages a mission mindset, local action (community service collections), and opportunities to put their faith into practice (sharing their stories, sharing their understanding of the Biblical stories).