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ABSTRACT

MINISTRY STRATEGY FOR RETAINING YOUTH AND YOUNG
ADULTS IN THE AUSTRALIAN UNION CONFERENCE

by

Jeffrey N. Parker

Adviser: Barry Gane

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Professional Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: MINISTRY STRATEGY FOR RETAINING YOUTH AND YOUNG
ADULTS IN THE AUSTRALIAN UNION CONFERENCE

Name of Researcher: Jeffrey N. Parker

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Barry Gane, PhD

Date completed: July 2023

Problem

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Australia (known as the Australian Union Conference) there is a significant loss of membership continuance by youth and young adults that falls into the category of the so-called millennials. Church attendance and membership loss of millennials is a problem in the Australian Union Conference.

Method

After consulting Scripture and current literature on families and family values, this researcher developed a quantitative and qualitative survey for Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Australian Millennials. It used a professional survey program that guaranteed the anonymity of each person. Embedded within the 18-question survey was space for personal responses. It was widely advertised using all the

communication pathways available to the Youth Departments of the Union Conference and the nine Local Conferences. There were 424 survey responses, with some 30,000 words of personal understanding and attitudes.

The data collected from Adventist millennials in Australia completed the strategy to implement change within the Seventh-day Adventist Church of the Australian Union Conference. After the discovery of the six essential strategies outlined in the book “*Growing Young*” there was a process where these strategies were adapted to fit the Australian Adventist church and rolled out into five of the nine conferences with more than 90 churches participating. This adaption was called “Growing Together.”

Results

This research drew attention to personal, demographic, social, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of the youth and young adults. The number and quality of responses provided valuable input for the youth department. In particular, the youth and young adults were very positive about the fact that they were being listened to. They wanted to be accepted for who they are, and they also wanted to participate actively within the functioning of the church. They desired much more than that of being passive observers. The data collected from the survey aligned with every one of the six essential strategies outlined in *Growing Young*. This included: keychain leadership, fueling a warm community, prioritizing young people everywhere, taking Jesus’ message seriously, empathizing with today’s young people, and being the best neighbor.

“Growing Together,” as noted above, was ready in late 2019 to be rolled out to all nine Australian conferences the next year. The impact of COVID-19 in 2020 and beyond transformed the strategy into a smaller version and instead rolled out to

five of the nine conferences with more than 90 churches participating from the year 2020. COVID-19 had many negative impacts on the church with continuous lockdowns and the inability for churches to meet. As restrictions lifted churches came back together and many are now continuing with the implementation of the “Growing Together” strategies. It is exciting to see church culture moving in a positive direction with many good news stories coming to light from stronger mentor/mentee relationships, greater intergenerational connections, and much stronger family networks being developed. It must be acknowledged that the rolling out of these six essential strategies is moving towards a positive change of church culture within the Australian church. It must also be noted that the implementation of these strategies are a “slow cooker” approach. While changes made from 2020 onwards are making inroads, and the preliminary changes will be reported in later chapters, the real test of this change will be five to seven years into the future which is outside the scope of this study.

Conclusions

This process of working through the issues and gaining the information has provided the youth and young adults themselves, along with the Union Conference and the Local Conferences, a much clearer picture of what is happening in the Australian Union Conference. The data collected has helped to clarify where constructive change is needed, and what issues have been negative in outcome.

With the rollout of “Growing Together” well underway, the Australian Adventist church is already seeing positive changes in church culture and the way that church is done. The intentional emphasis on mentor/mentee relationships, stronger intergenerational relationships and stronger families is having a positive impact on the Australian Adventist church. Change happens slowly and the goal of the

implementation of these strategies is to see a stronger engagement of church life with millennials and the following generations.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

MINISTRY STRATEGY FOR RETAINING YOUTH AND YOUNG
ADULTS IN THE AUSTRALIAN UNION CONFERENCE

A Professional Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
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July 2023

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	xi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	xiii
 Chapter	
1. FRAMING THE STUDY.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Ministry Context.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Statement of the Task.....	3
Delimitations.....	4
Description of the Project Process.....	4
Defining the term Millennial.....	5
2. A THEOLOGY OF RELATIONSHIPS – A THEOLOGICAL REVIEW.....	7
Introduction.....	7
Families and Relationships.....	8
Facilitating Care (Mentoring).....	11
Intergenerational Relationships.....	14
Summary.....	19
3. LITERATURE RELATING TO MILLENNIAL ENGAGEMENT.....	21
Introduction.....	21
The Problem.....	21
Informative, Transformative and Evaluative Literature.....	23
Searching for a Solution.....	25
Intergenerational Connections, Mentoring and Discipleship.....	26
Service and Cause.....	36
Parenting and Household Connections.....	38
Summary.....	43
4. THE DESCRIPTION OF MILLENNIAL ENGAGEMENT INTERVENTION.....	45
Introduction.....	45
Lack of Millennial Engagement.....	45
Combined Insights on Intervention.....	47
Description of the Intervention.....	48
Research Methodology and Protocol.....	54

Confidentiality.....	55
Data Analysis.....	55
Summary.....	56
5. THE REALIZATION OF THE PLAN.....	57
Introduction and Themes.....	57
Summary.....	62
6. BRINGING IT TOGETHER.....	63
Introduction.....	63
Survey Responses and Insights.....	64
The Questions.....	66
Written Responses Giving Insight and Opinions.....	68
Negative Response Narratives.....	68
Positive Response Narratives.....	69
“Things to Change” Analysis.....	70
Acceptance.....	71
The Church Itself.....	72
Service.....	74
Hot drinks, biscuits and Saturday luncheon.....	75
Music.....	76
Quality Religious Information and Learning.....	77
I Love my Church and Some Churches are Already Doing it Well.....	78
Mid-week Activities and Activities of a Social Nature.....	79
Issues that were Presented by an Individual or a Small Number of Responders.....	80
Youth and the Issue of Worthwhile Mentoring.....	81
Will I take time to stop and Observe?	82
Peer Relationships and Those Slightly Older.....	83
Sometimes it Doesn’t Hurt us to be Jolted a Little.....	83
And there is More – this Gives a Warm Glow.....	84
Personnel Cost Money, but it is Worth it.....	84
Established Older Members.....	85
Mums and Dads.....	85
Conclusions.....	87
Recommendations.....	89
Summary.....	93
APPENDIX A Defining the Generations.....	95
APPENDIX B The Survey Document.....	99
APPENDIX C The IRB Approval Document.....	104
APPENDIX D Youth Engagement Summit Recommendations.....	109
APPENDIX E Funding Proposal for “Growing Young Churches Australia”..	117
APPENDIX F Adventists Australia – Growing Together Cohort.....	120
APPENDIX G Growing Young Core Commitments.....	129
APPENDIX H The Australian Union Conference Strategic Plan.....	131
APPENDIX I Disciple Focused Life Leadership.....	133
APPENDIX J What Have You Done? Church Leadership Positions.....	141
APPENDIX K Growing Together Success Stories	143
REFERENCE LIST.....	146
VITA.....	149

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Age Groups Of 424 Participants.....	62
Table 2 Attendance Habits Of The 424 Participants.....	65
Table 3 The Very Affirmative And Positive Responses.....	67
Table 4 The Importance Of The Attitude Of Acceptance.....	70
Table 5 The Character And Quality Of The Church Itself.....	72
Table 6 The Need for Participation In Active Service.....	72
Table 7 Social Aspects Are Very Important In Worship.....	74
Table 8 Music Is A Significant Aspect Of Life And Worship.....	75
Table 9 Religion That Satisfies Needs Quality Learning Processes.....	76
Table 10 I Love My Church And The Care They Provide.....	77
Table 11 There Is More To Church Than Just Week-end Services.....	78
Table 12 A Number Of Issues That Require Attention.....	79
Table 13 Am I Really Observed and Cared For?.....	80
Table 14 Community: A Set Of Values And Kindness.....	81
Table 15 It May Cost Money, But Each Person Is Worthwhile.....	82
Table 16 Never Too Old To Care And Facilitate.....	83

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Age Groups Pie Chart (Q1).....	63
Figure 2: Gender Of Participants (Q2)	63

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CHAPTER 1
FRAMING THE STUDY

Introduction

This project deals with a problem that faced the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) in Australia. Youth, in very large numbers, left the church when they completed high school. It is a problem that is far more widespread than the SDA Church.

The project undertaken was to research this growing problem and to see if a reasonable set of answers could be found to deal with this issue within the SDA Church of Australia. It was anticipated that a top-down package telling the youth and young adults how to live and be would be entirely counter-productive. What was needed was for the youth and young adults to have a place for their own voice that was not only enunciated by them, but was heard by, and listened to, by the SDA administration.

In many ways the project has already moved down the path of rewarding initial success. The youth and young adults have been heard to say “at last they are listening to us!” The heart of this research found its strength and vitality in an 18 point survey questionnaire that had responses from 424 persons. This document was made available to the youth and young adults of the SDA church, whether baptized or not, but who attended the SDA church, both regularly and irregularly.

Ministry Context

This project took place in the Australian Union Conference (AUC) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA). The Australian Union Conference, with its office in Melbourne, is

part of the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists with its office in Sydney. The AUC is made up of a consortium of nine conferences that encompass the whole of Australian territory. The focus point of this study was youth and young adults ages from 18–37 years of age during 2019-2021. This age group, in the relevant literature, is referred to as “millennials” (Fromm., Butler, and Dickey, 2015). These authors assert, “Millennials clearly want to make a difference and be involved in organizations that add goodness into the world” (p. 33). Youth statistics are of concern:

One concerning statistic from this year’s survey shows a proportional reduction in young people attending church. Overall, the 15-34 age group decreased from 18.9 to 16.9 per cent of the total attendance, with the males in this age group decreasing from 18.1 to 16.1 per cent. (*Adventist Record* June 10, 2021, p. 6)

I serve as the Director of Youth Ministries for Australia and my role includes mentoring and coaching the youth directors of the nine conferences. This involves training and speaking across the country, being an advocate for youth ministries in Australia, and leading change in youth ministry.

Statement of the Problem

Millennials have been studied by religious scholars particularly in the way they tend to walk away from the Christian church. In Australian studies that have focused across the denominations it has become clear that, beginning around the time that the students leave High School and go to University, or alternatively to full time employment, up to 70% leave the churches (Hughes, 2015). Hughes has presented statistical evidence for the USA, UK and Australia. The Seventh-day Adventist church suffers from the same problem as mainstream churches (*Adventist Record*, 2021). Seventh-day Adventists were established in Australia in 1885 when a group of missionaries travelled from the United States of America (Schwarz, 1979, p. 149). The baptized membership in Australia as of August 15, 2021 was 63,740.

An attendance survey (Australian Union Conference, 2021) revealed that some 33,262 members, or approximately 52% attend on a weekly basis in the 439 churches. Australia's population is just over 24 million, with 21.5% of the population being millennials (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Around 16 million or 66% of the population are Caucasians, with the rest being a mix of numerous nationalities.

The Christian Research Association (2015) stated that currently 72% of those aged 15-29 and 67% aged 30-39 are leaving the Christian church in Australia (Hughes, p. 3). This is replicated in the Adventist church as well (Worker, 2020 and 2021). Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data (2020 and 2021) show that millennials are 21.5% of the population, but only 16.9% of the Adventist church are youth and young adults. This loss is continuing as these youth step out of church life. Many youth and young adults do not see church as relevant and are simply walking away. One contributing factor to this could be that youth and young adult ministry is seen as ineffective or almost non-existent at/in many local SDA Churches. Another contributing factor could be that as young people age out of youth and young adult ministry, they don't transition into the broader church and its ministries.

Statement of the Task

The task of this project was to glean from theological reflection and a review of pertinent literature, and then obtain input from millennial Seventh-day Adventist young people in the Australian Union Conference and apply a strategy in response to the theoretical research and data collected. An Andrews University academically approved survey was developed, and this resulted in 424 responses from young adults ages 18 to 37. The survey targeted young adults who have been involved in the Seventh-day Adventist church during their life. The survey respondents were at all stages of their Christian journey, ranging from those that are fully committed to those that described themselves as non-attenders. A number of survey questions evaluated their journey within the church. Opportunity was given for

them to share what they (the youth of this study) believe would make the church a better place. Responses have been tabulated and evaluated and added to the findings of the current academic literature. Following that survey outcome, there was an effort to combine these insights with a biblical theological reflection. From this, a new ministry strategy has been developed and is in the process of being implemented within Seventh-day Adventist congregations around Australia. A representative group of five conferences and 90 congregations served as the testing ground for the effectiveness of the intervention.

Delimitations

This project was implemented in the Australian Union Conference (AUC). The implementation of these strategies are a “slow cooker” approach. While changes made will be documented in later chapters, the real test of this change will be five to seven years into the future which is outside the scope of this study.

Description of the Project Process

In order to develop a theological basis for effective youth and young adult ministry, three areas of biblical teaching were examined. They included passages of the Bible that spoke concerning intergenerational ministry, along with youth and young adult mentoring, together with principles of family formation. The textual focus was built around an understanding of Deut 11:18-21; 1 Pet 5:1-11 and 1 John 2:2-14 (NLT).¹ All three areas noted above are encapsulated within human relationships and their development throughout the bible.

Following this theological task the project moved into a literature review, focusing on the question of youth and young adult engagement in local church life. This led into the issue of effective and ineffective youth and young adult ministry in the local churches. To

¹ All subsequent scriptural references will use the New Living Translation (NLT), unless otherwise indicated.

accomplish this, a number of preliminary church youth ministry strategies were examined, and this enabled the development of a suggested ministry strategy, one that might be effective within the context of millennial youth.

The results of this initial research gave impetus to the task, particularly in the development of the major survey questionnaire. Before the survey instrument was fully developed, some early insights and plans were drawn up and tried. This meant that there were some useful guidelines that could be worthwhile for youth and young adult ministry. The results of the survey have now been evaluated, and then combined with the theological and literature review. This presented a pathway forward.

While there was a theoretical pathway forward we were very interested in the praxis of this pathway. As our team of Australian youth directors examined ways to roll out the findings of this pathway, we discovered that the six essential strategies of Fuller's (year) *Growing Young* fitted "hand in glove" with the findings (p. 142). This led to a major Australian-wide roll out of Growing Together, which was an Australian Seventh-day Adventist church adaption of *Growing Young*. This Australian version, had three foundational components which became the focus of the Growing Together strategy across five conferences and 90 Seventh-day Adventist congregations.

Defining the Term Millennial

Fromm, Butler, and Dickey (2015) suggest that millennials are "the earliest digital natives" and that they are "content creators and users" (p. 28). They "crave adventure" and "strive for a healthy lifestyle" (p. 28). However, they "seek peer evaluation," and are "hooked on social media" (p. 28). One very important characteristic is that "millennials embrace authentic cause marketing and align to brands that have a higher purpose" (p. 28).

Encyclopedia Britannica (2023) puts it this way:

Millennial, also called Generation Y or Gen Y, term used to describe a person born between 1981 and 1996, though different sources can vary by a year or two. It was first used in the book *Generations* (1991) by William Strauss and Neil Howe, who felt it was an appropriate name for the first generation to reach adulthood in the new millennium. Millennials are the cohort between Generation X (Gen X; defined as those born between 1965 and 1980) and Generation Z (Gen Z; defined as those born from about 1997 to the early 2010s). (Encyclopedia Britannica, para. 2)

The Millennials, is a name tag that has been given to them. One of the problems of name tags is that they can at times be misleading and too conforming. For me as a youth director, I do not think of them as millennials, but as my friends of a later generation. In this modern age we tend to label too much, and in a sense, millennials would eschew the title, rather desiring to be accepted as to who they are: human individuals that desire friendship, love, meaning and purpose. For a formal definition of the millennials and all other generations, see APPENDIX A.

CHAPTER 2

A THEOLOGY OF RELATIONSHIPS – A THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

Introduction

Relationships are a core part of human life and existence. The priority of relationships reaches back to the first chapters of Genesis. In some chapters of Genesis, God appears to have an optimum relationship with humanity (Gen 1:26-31, NLT). Yet, a few chapters later we have the stories of the tower of Babel (Gen 11), the great inundation of the Flood (Gen 7 and 8) and Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19). In the Biblical narrative at Eden, God created the first family connection and from that we see the ongoing development of family and relationships (Gen 1). At times, like today, there were families that functioned well, and ones that did not.

In this chapter, a theology of relationships will be developed. The Hebrew family was noted for its strong relationships and its unity and cohesiveness. What was it that made this unity and cohesiveness so important in the biblical times? Why was it that the Hebrew family structure was very intergenerational in its make-up? How did those intergenerational connections work? Does the biblical model of family and relationships still have an impact on us today?

Strong families and good relationships are seen within the book of Deuteronomy, where the undergirding factor is love for God. This process enabled faith and life to be passed on from one generation to the next.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on

your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.
(Deut 6:4-9, NIV)

These commands are an early biblical directive to be intentional about building relationships within the family and between individuals. This process was to be both long term and intimate. A close bond was needed to see growth. There are three significant things in these verses. Firstly, we see a strong family structure in place. Secondly, we observe some major intergenerational connections being developed as old and young interact with each other. Thirdly, there is intentional mentoring taking place between the generations. All three blend as one.

This chapter focuses on biblical and theological issues with an emphasis on families and their relationships, aspects of caring and mentoring, and the development of strong intergenerational relationships.

Families and Relationships

The growth of strong families is paramount in the biblical revelation. While there are many occasions where family structures fail within the written word, there are insights suggesting that family still has a major role to play. Hence, in the first creation account of Genesis human beings are portrayed as being in His image (Gen 1:1-2:4a, NLT). The family provided the essential aspects of teaching and preparation of children to live worthwhile lives. Families were central to the education for life and living. Families, in the Biblical setting were not just conveyors of cultural values, they were also facilitators of religious and spiritual values. The question could be asked as to whether the Hebrew family was any different to that of the Canaanite family, for example? Possibly, the real difference was that they were participants in a religious setting that was seeking to develop a community that challenged each individual to be committed to a God that could command, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18).

As a general principle, families are of high value within Scripture. There are two very strong dimensions of family that are shown early in the Hebrew text. They are shown by the use of the words *Bayith* and *Mishpachah*. These are the two words that are used through the Hebrew Old Testament that are translated as “family.” One describes a “household of faith” and the other refers to a larger “community of faith,” respectively. The key that is outlined in scripture and particularly Hebrew culture was that all children belonged to a “household” and it was this close communal setting that had the major influence on their development as human beings. The first word *Bayith*, communicates the concept of what we would now call the family unit or immediate family, uniting parents and children together under one roof. We find this word in the instructions given to the children of Israel as they are reminded of the significance of the Passover meal (Exod 12:21-28). In verses 26 and 27 we see this being played out: “Then your children will ask, ‘What does this ceremony mean?’ And you will reply, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, for he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt. And though he struck the Egyptians, he spared our families’” (Exod 12:26-27).

Mishpachah carries within itself the sense of tribe, clan, or community. It is in fact a bond of kinship uniting people to a common cause. Two key texts, Deuteronomy 6:5-7 and 11:18-19, are instructions for the passing of values and a belief and a belief system from one generation to another. They are given in the context of *Mishpachah*. These two key words, *Bayith* and *Mishpachah*, and the understanding of them, play a very important role in the formation of strong families and faith relationships (Here2Stay, 2018).

Ultimately, God created the family to be a living demonstration of the good news (Pollard, 2016). God created both man and woman and then united them as “one flesh,” then blessed them with the exhortation to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:27, 28; 2:23, 24). This theme is revisited again where God himself instructed His people to train up their children in the “way of holiness and truth” (Deut 11:19 and Prov 22:6). It re-emphasized a similar

message when the Psalmist declared that “children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward” (Ps 127:3).

Families could form strong companionships that were designed to put into genuine place both man and wife. Humans were not designed to do life alone. Starting with Adam and Eve, and then continuing from that time, humans were designed to become “one flesh” and then to multiply and have children (Gen 2:18-25). Also, those family units were designed to be active and powerful evangelism and discipleship centers (Deut 6:5-7).

In the New Testament the concept of family also has an important place. There are principles including honor, love and care (Eph 6:2, 5:25, 6:24, and Titus 2:4). We could look at many different examples from the New Testament within all sections of the text including the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation. However, we need to delimit our scope.

One of the biggest responsibilities laid on parents is the challenge to grow their children from infant to child, to adolescent, to adult. Each age bracket requires not only the child to change via adolescence to youth and young adulthood, parents too, need to constantly adapt. As we discover this theology of relationship within the family, Deuteronomy 6 sets the scene for a solid grounding. Just as new believers crave spiritual milk before they move on to meat, so children begin with milk and move to solids, and then eventually make their own life decisions. Wise parents empower their children to live successfully as adults, which starts from infancy. There is much repetition seen in Deuteronomy. This learning or mentoring process is continuous. It appears that every moment of the day needs to be seen as an opportunity to teach, model and demonstrate the ways of God. In reality, disciple-making is closely parallel to parenting. Note what Paul said in 1 Thessalonians:

As apostles of Christ we certainly had a right to make some demands of you, but instead we were like children among you. Or we were like a mother feeding and caring for her own children. We loved you so much that we shared with you not only God’s Good News but our own lives, too... And you know that we treated each of

you as a father treats his own children. We pleaded with you, encouraged you, and urged you to live your lives in a way that God would consider worthy. For he called you to share in his Kingdom and glory. (1 Thess 2:7-12)

Familial relationships when functioning optimally, can have a powerful influence on the growth and development of humans. Sadly, the opposite also applies, poor parenting certainly can bring large problems. This section of the chapter is followed by examining how persons need to be surrounded by what might be called facilitating care.

Facilitating Care (Mentoring)

Mentoring is a wide-ranging term: it can cover many things, but at its foundation it speaks of being a wise and caring facilitator that does not interfere but is there when needed. It entails much more than merely passing on religious knowledge. It does not make decisions for another, but actively listens to the person. It can involve showing people how to love and serve God. Much of the mentoring process happens through intergenerational relationships that are forged as people connect in a real-world setting. While the word “mentor” does not appear in Scripture, the Greek term *meno* (with the notion of enduring relationship) is found in the New Testament 118 times and 33 times in the Gospel of John. John 15 uses *meno*, in a variety of ways, to explain the significance of strong relationships. *Meno* is used in both the aorist tense and present tense to show both immediacy and longevity of the relationship. In verse 5 the present participle is used (*menon*) which shows a progressive aspect of the relationship; while *meno* is used seven times in this chapter alone (John 15:4, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10). As Jesus moved toward the crucifixion he repeatedly used the term *meno* to express the “steadfast relationship” that He enjoyed with His disciples. There is also a variety of synonyms for “mentor” found in the New Testament writings which include: elder, disciple, and teacher (Moore, 2007). The Old Testament uses elder as a person of authority who is entitled to respect and reverence (Gen 50:7). We see a great example of this with Moses, who

shared his commission with the “elders of Israel,” and then 70 of them were chosen to bear with him the burdens of the people (Exod 3:16, Num 11:16,17) (Bradley, 2017).

While the word “discipler” does not appear in scripture, disciple and discipleship do. Discipleship is about becoming like Jesus, or entering a relationship with Him (Luke 6:40). As growth happens, those who are discipled become less focused on themselves and more focused on others in a selfless servant-hood (Philippians 2:1-8). Authentic discipleship is about becoming a living example for others to observe. Ultimately discipleship deals with a sense of authenticity and being genuine (1 Cor 11:1) (Baker, 1996; Bell, 2017). Many words used in the New Testament show this teaching process, including: to teach (Matt 7:29); to instruct systematically (Acts 18:25); to train disciples (Matt 28:19); to train or instruct (Heb 12:6); to correct or counsel (1 Thess 5:14), to command or order (Acts 15:5), and to hand down tradition (Matt 11:27) (Baker, 1996).

As we look further into scripture we see a relationship-building process taking place. In Genesis 2, we find God engaged in a one-on-one relationship with Adam. It appears that he has anticipated Adam’s limitations, and then provided guidance. We see a teaching/learning model taking place. There is a very powerful rapport (Bradley, 2017). Ecclesiastes suggests that “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up” (Eccl 4:9-10). Proverbs also argues, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another” (Prov 27:17). Paul challenged the reader by saying “I myself am convinced, my brother and sisters, that you yourself are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another” (Rom 15:14). The writer of Hebrews reiterated this by saying, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the day approaching” (Heb 10:24-25).

In his letter to the Philippians Paul stated, “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you” (Phil 4:9).

When we look at the modelling of care for one another, there is no stronger example than Jesus himself. His approach incorporated the creating and communicating of a life vision, and then continued through teaching via both verbal instruction and experiential learning in a secure mutually committed relationship. He also had what appears to be an “intimate relationship” with his protégés. This relationship was allowed to develop and had fluidity and this fluidity depended on the direction of teaching, which was based on insightful questions and life circumstances. Jesus also had strong, enduring, life-long relationships which took time to develop (Bradley, 2017). Jesus imparted knowledge and values through his words and actions to show his disciples, and anyone who was watching, that the values of the kingdom of God were different from the values of the world. He challenged the leaders of the day and modelled care and compassion (Matt 12:9-13). He continued to challenge dysfunctional thinking held by the religious leaders while strengthening his friends and followers. When the teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, he modelled compassion and care (John 8:3-7). His model was based on simplicity and compassion. Much of what he did was very hands-on-practical. They saw him as the master, yet he paradoxically became a humble servant. Jesus was preparing his disciples. He challenged them to not only learn from his example but to live it:

After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, “Do you understand what I was doing? You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because that’s what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.” (John 13:12-15)

Not only did Jesus model servant leadership, but he also modelled a direct ministry plan. Luke stated “...he gave them power and authority to drive out demons and to cure

diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and heal the sick” (Luke 9:1-2,6 NIV). Jesus repeated that same power and authority when he said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father son and Holy Spirit... And surely I am with you always, to the end of the very age” (Matt 28:18-20, NIV).

Jesus used day-to-day dilemmas to illustrate higher truths. For example, the Good Samaritan, which was radical thinking, helped grow his disciples beyond their failures and imperfections. The disciples needed to learn how to relate to God and what type of people he wanted them to become. His challenge was one of teaching them to follow, obey, grow in humility and be self-sacrificing with servant hearts.

Facilitating care tends to often move in the direction of Intergenerational relationships that we will now consider.

Intergenerational Relationships

Scripture offers multiple snapshots of mentor-mentee relationships being developed and strengthened. Moses, the foundational prophet, provided us with a number of strong examples of fulfilling a mentor’s role: he laid out the institution of parental instruction when it came to the understanding of the Passover story (Exod 12); he highlighted a shift of attention from the older generation (the wilderness) to the new generation (those who would enter the promised land); he demonstrated that the role of growing spiritual “elders” was not just the responsibility of the prophet, but instead for all the people of God. God directed him to shift some of the responsibility of meeting the needs of the people to the elders (Num 11). Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law saw a situation where Moses sought to accomplish more than was physically possible, and challenged him by offering a way to move forward. Moses listened and changed direction: “Now listen to me, and let me give you a word of advice, and may God be with you... when Jethro said... Moses listened to his father-in-law’s advice and

followed his suggestions” (Exod 18:14-27). There was a sequence of facilitation, Moses by his father-in-law, and Joshua by Moses. This leadership development was a result of the mentoring that had taken place over many years. We first saw Joshua chosen by Moses as one who was a candidate for mentoring and future leadership (Exod 17:8-16). We then find that he was given further opportunity for service and training after the victory over Amalek (Exod 24:12-14). Moses spent significant time teaching Joshua humility. Moses was not threatened by Joshua and his ability to be a great leader, instead he set out to grow Joshua’s leadership to great heights (Num 11:24-30). As Joshua developed he proved that he had the ability to be courageous despite the fears of the majority (Num 13-14). Along the journey Moses prepared Joshua to receive the baton of leadership in the future (Num 17:12-23). Finally, the day came where Joshua was ready to lead without the support of Moses (Josh 1). One obvious human fault is that there is no indication of Joshua hand-picking a successor. He did not do what had been done for him.

Elijah and Elisha also had a dynamic mentor-mentee relationship that was intergenerational. This relationship is assumed to be around six to eight years in length and came later in Elijah’s life. Elijah certainly had some deep traumatic experiences that had taken place in his life prior to meeting Elisha (1 Kgs 19). In their first encounter, Elisha was willing to let go of his occupation, his family, and the life that he had built thus far in order to follow a man who was guiding him. He killed his oxen and burned the yoke, then gave it all to the neighborhood as he left to follow Elijah (1 Kgs 19:21). The transmission of a sacred inheritance to the next generation was taking place. Malachi refocuses the initial divine call to Elijah to teach and influence that nation, “to turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents” (Mal 4:6). We saw the impact of Elijah mentoring Elisha when he called him “my father, my father,” and pointed to the relationship of a prophetic leader to his disciples (2 Kgs 2:12). He also “poured water on Elijah’s hand” which

was a phrase that indicated an apprenticeship role (2 Kgs 3:11). Later, Elisha inherited Elijah's role as father to the "sons of the prophets" by accepting and wearing the cloak after Elijah had ascended to heaven (2 Kgs 2:13-15; Bradley, 2017). Elijah was about to walk out of Elisha's life and told him, "Stay here, for the LORD has told me to go to the Jordan River," but again Elisha replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you." (2 Kgs 2:6-7). They went on together. This bond was strong. This protégé's relationship was bound by the "cloak" of Elijah; it was placed around his neck on the first day they met (1 Kgs 19:19), and it was picked up by him as he saw Elijah leave for heaven (2 Kgs 2:6). Elijah left him his cloak as a symbol that it was now time for this younger man to fulfil God's plans for him. The request for a "double portion of your spirit" was the language of inheritance from a father to a son (2 Kgs 2:9). Again, maybe it is just the silence of Scripture, but there is no record of Elisha reaching out to his successor.

Another example of an intergenerational relationship is found in the book of Ruth. It portrays Naomi as a mentor to Ruth, who was her Moabite daughter-in-law. Ruth had such a strong relationship with Naomi that she refused to leave her for any reason (Ruth 1:8-19). There was unspeakable grief on the part of all the woman involved in this story as they all, over a period of 10 years, lost their husbands (Ruth 1:3-7). Naomi maintained an important, strong relationship with her daughters-in-law during this time. Naomi spoke to both Ruth and Orpah concerning their life journey. The impact on Ruth, in particular, was strong, and she decided to stay at her mentor's side and not go back to her people (Ruth 1:17-18). Naomi expressed her deepest internal pain and confessed her bitterness to the younger woman (Ruth 1:11-13). Here, Naomi revealed layers of transparency when it was needed. She, as mentor, needed to modify her personal boundaries while at the same time maintaining autonomy and personal identity (Ruth 1:19). Naomi gave counsel to Ruth which enabled her to fit in culturally and function with the traditional processes at the threshing floor (Ruth 3:3). Naomi

finally saw the fruits of her mentorship of Ruth, when she held her ‘grandson,’ who was in the lineage of the Messiah (Ruth 4:13-22, Matt 1:5-6) (Walfish, 2013).

Paul was transformed from his self-appointed role of chief persecutor of the church (Phil 3:6) to a devoted minister of Christ to the Gentiles (Rom 15:16). This change did not just happen without some very intentional intervention, which happened after the road to Damascus experience, when Barnabas brought him to the apostles, which began a long-term connection between them (Acts 9:26-30). This mentoring relationship started in earnest when Barnabas recruited Paul to help him teach the new believers in Antioch (Acts 11:25-26). Barnabas guided Paul in his development from novice follower of Christ to the greatest propagator of faith in the early church. Rivera (2007) suggests that there are five key areas of development that took place in the interactions between Barnabas and Paul in this intentional relationship. Firstly, there was a sponsorship that took place. Barnabas, as a sponsor of Paul, had credibility as a leader and was respected in the church of Jerusalem (Acts 4:36). The church feared Paul and rightly so (Acts 9:4-5, 13-14, 26). Barnabas, known as the “son of encouragement” persuaded the church to accept Paul (Acts 4:39). Barnabas’ sponsorship opened the way for Paul to enter the rank of the disciples. Secondly, there was the initiation stage. Paul was disliked by many people because of his bold proclamation of Jesus Christ (Acts 9:28-29) and was sent to Tarsus for safe-keeping. After a period of approximately three years, Barnabas went to Tarsus to ask for Paul’s assistance in teaching the believers in Antioch (Gal 1:17-18; Acts 11:25-26). Much personal growth happened for Paul during this initiation phase of their relationship. Thirdly, we have what Rivera calls the cultivation stage. This is where mutual trust was built between the mentor and mentee. We can see that this pattern began to develop in the first missionary journey (Acts 13:1, 2, and 7). Barnabas took the risk of letting Paul speak in Cyprus (Acts 13:9-12). Barnabas tested Paul’s development on a regular basis. There was also a change in the way that both are mentioned. We see a

move from Barnabas' name being the lead name to Paul's name alternating with him (Acts 13:7, 13, 43; 14:14; and 15:12, 25). This emerging leader was gaining experience and confidence during this cultivation stage. Fourthly, there was a separation stage that took place. Barnabas and Paul separated over discussions about Mark's role in their future (Acts 15:36-39). During the cultivation stage Paul, who would have probably defaulted to Barnabas' view, now made his own call on many big decisions. Lastly, there was a time of redefinition. Both Barnabas and Paul came to a very abrupt end to their mentoring relationship and decided to take new partners and continue their missionary work (Acts 15:39-40) (Rivers, 2013). Biehl (1996) rightly stated that the influence of Barnabas continued to flow into the life of Paul and in turn inspired his future relationship with Timothy:

So while we rightly think of Paul as the strategic spokesman for Christ in the New Testament, we must never forget that behind Paul was a Barnabas. In fact, Paul seemed to be echoing Barnabas when he wrote Timothy, "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be qualified to teach other." (p. 33 and 2 Tim 2:2)

Just as Barnabas had influence over Paul through an intentional mentorship, so Paul had an equally important mentoring relationship with Timothy, and to a lesser extent, Silvanus and Titus (2 Cor 1:1, 1 Thess 1:1, and Gal 3:1). Again, there is a human anomaly, Paul struggled with mentoring John Mark, but seemed happy to mentor Timothy.

Timothy was mentored by Paul who had passed on what had been given to him. Some of the important things in this transference phase were: support through regular communication (2 Tim 1:2); a confirmation of unconditional love and interest in their welfare (2 Tim 1:2); a continual thanks to God for what Timothy was doing and many earnest prayers over his life (2 Tim 1:4); a continual outpouring of compliments for his protégé, with a constant belief in who he was and would become, by giving him much responsibility (2 Tim 1:6); and finally, the care and respect shown through correction that is given when needed (Gnanakan, 2015).

One should not assume that mentor/mentee relationships are permanent. They serve a purpose and when that purpose is no longer relevant it seems reasonable for the relationship to change to what is necessary at any given time. This change can be effected from either side of the relationship. It is to be hoped that these changing relationships are amicable, kind, and facilitating.

Summary

While developing a theology of relationships there are three key areas that stand out. Firstly, we find that strong families are an integral part of God's design for our lives. Strong family households are a major key. The *Bayith* (household of faith) and *Mishpachah* (communities of faith) were building blocks. Deuteronomy is a snapshot of what God desired families to look like. His family design, which was built on the "man and wife" in Eden, and God's desire of "one flesh," was for strength and stability (Deut 6:5-7). These families were designed to be the earthly face of God himself while at the same time it provided for the needs of its members.

The second and third key areas were so closely linked that they can be classed as one. Both intergenerational relationships and mentoring are key in the development of a theology of relationships.

An important concept that finds expression in the New Testament is focused on the concept of staying, abiding, remaining. The Greek word *meno*, has a significant link to strong relationships. Jesus himself, modelled a steadfast relationship with his disciples and developed them from average men to pillars of the faith. In the biblical narrative, there are number of significant steps being put into place, which included a sponsorship of the individual. There is an intentional connection or bond that is initiated, which takes time. Then, we see an initiation stage which could be classed as a time of growth.

Much learning and growing flows from this stage. Many of the important key learning moments happened here. From this, a cultivation process developed mutual trust. Next, a time of redefinition took place. Growth of both the mentor and mentee has happened. Often, in the biblical examples, we saw new mentor mentee relationships develop as new opportunities arose.

As we looked at the examples right throughout the written Word, we can see the value of strong families and intergenerational mentor mentee connections. The biggest challenge for us living in Western society is the breakdown of family that has already begun to take place, especially over the last few decades.

It is with a sense of prayerfulness that we come to the end of the theological chapter. Maybe, these verses out of the middle of a host of genealogies makes a salient point:

Jabez was honored more than his brothers, and his mother named him Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory and that your hand might be with me and that you would keep me from hurt and harm!" And God granted what he asked. (1 Chr 4:9-10, NRSV)

Like Jabez, it is my request that as my mind has been challenged in this doctoral study, and as I seek to awaken a sense of openness in the youth and young persons of the SDA church in Australia, that my prayer will reach its fulfilment with an increase in millennial retention and satisfaction within the church.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE RELATING TO MILLENNIAL ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

In this chapter that presents the literature review, there will be an examination of research literature that focus on why young Christians are leaving the Christian church. This will then lead to an examination of literature that concerns itself with values, ideologies and insights that facilitate successful Christian ministry to youth and young adults. In the final focus point of chapter two it was recognized that three factors were of high importance. In one sense they all have to deal with family, but in another they deal with community. These three factors are of vital importance. They are based on (1) the solid foundation of stable families, (2) combined with the necessity of warm facilitating intergenerational interaction, and (3) the development of quality mentoring function.

The Problem

In June 2017, the Barna Group suggested six reasons why young Christians leave the church. It was the culmination of a five year project and stated that they were dealing with “a rapidly shifting culture. First, “churches seem overprotective” in seeking to keep their youth from things in the world like movies, video games, and music that is harmful, while not dealing with the real issues that confront a modern world. The church in general tends to demonize anything outside the church. Second, “teens’ and twentysomethings’ experience of Christianity is shallow.” Many saw church as boring, that God was missing from their lives, and that faith did not find any relevance with their career choices and interests. Third, “churches come across as antagonistic to science.” Part of the problem here is that churches

often set themselves up as knowing all the answers. One area that has become alienating was the ongoing creation evolution debate. Fourth, “young Christians’ church experience related to sexuality are often simplistic, judgmental.” Many do not marry until later, and the world they live in has a different set of values. The young Christians are engaging in sexual activity and are harshly judged by their church. Five, “they wrestle with the exclusive nature of Christianity.” Modern youth have been brought up in a society that argues for open minded approaches, toleration of difference, and acceptance. One challenging area is that many churches are very intolerant of other churches. Often youth feel as though they are forced to choose between their faith and their friends. Six, “the church feels unfriendly to those who doubt.” The church answers are often seen as trivial and shallow (Barna Group, 2017, pp. 1-3).

This is also the picture within the SDA church. It is not too far removed from what takes place in other denominations. In short, the SDA church often appears to youth as authoritarian, domineering, having all the correct answers doctrinally, being scientifically up to date, except when questions of evolution come up, and too often locked into their own traditions. They often come across to youth as being either unwilling, unable, or uncertain when any hard questions are asked. Too often the answer given is, “We’ve always done it that way!” These attitudes are clearly evident, spread throughout the 30,000 words that were written in reply to the survey questionnaire.

Earls (2019) looked at a number of reasons why young adults leave the church. His tabulation of issues and problems largely agrees with the Barna Group. In his listing, such things as judgmental and hypocritical attitudes, out of date and old fashioned ways of thinking about social and political problems, and a certain smugness of maintaining the traditions, meant that for the youth and young adults the church did not deal with real issues.

Informative, Transformative and Evaluative Literature

There are multiple reasons why young people leave the church and the faith. At the heart of this disturbing trend is a failure to critically consider what it takes to see young people grow as long-term, active disciples of Jesus in response to His final command (Matt 28:18-20).

In the past few decades, postmodernism has fueled a shift in emphasis from community-based thinking to the primacy of the individual. What the church has not realized is that the developmental needs of an individual person are seen as preeminent over the needs of the corporate body—and this has affected the attitude and attachment younger generations have toward the church (Here2Stay, 2016).

Hughes (2016) and the Christian Research Association have been researching in Australia for many years and, in 2016, completed a major research initiative with many Christian denominations within Australia. This research showed that 72% of millennials will have left the church by age 30. Goodwin (2013) confirms that more than 50% of youth are lost in the transition phases as they move between high school and the next chapter of their lives.

Over against those that leave the church are those that have no affiliation with religion at all. These have been called “the nones” (White, 2014). There is a shift towards a more secular world view with the church facing a diminishing effectiveness in shaping the lifestyle and values of society. With this secularization of society there is an increasing privatization that is widening the chasm between the private and public life of individual persons. Speeding up these processes is the plurality of the modern world with its multiplicity of choice. There is so much choice and there is so much diversity of opinion that assails particularly the young as they mature (White, 2014). There are competing ideologies and

many of them appear quite attractive. In this setting the old traditional faith model with its often authoritarian way of presentation has been left behind. This has led authors like Clark (2016) to state: “Traditional faith has been lost, and great numbers of emerging adults have a negative view of church and want nothing to do with us” (p. 114).

David Kinnaman and the Barna Group (2011) have been researching one of the greatest concerns facing the church today—the loss of a generation. Their book *You Lost Me* endeavors to catalog the response of millennials leaving the church, and their previous work *UnChristian* (2007) captured the reasoning behind why this generation is turned off by Christianity. It is evident that the problems in USA are not too far removed from those in Australia. In the Western world there is a lot of overlap between what happens to the youth and young adults in the churches of USA and the churches of Australia. After all, much of Australian culture was, and is, affected and influenced by Hollywood.

The church had an image problem and there was a tug-a-war with society. Society seemed to be winning and millennials saw the church as hypocritical, anti-homosexual, sheltered, too political, judgmental, too focused on converts, and not concerned with those who are already part of the church.

This theme of youth and millennial disengagement from church life is summarized well by Gibson (2004). He showed the growing disengagement that has taken place since the late 1990s with research from numerous scholars. Then he asked the question, “What are we as a church going to do about it”? (p. 32). He believed that “the answer exists in changing the way many congregations approach youth ministry” (p. 32). One very problematic issue was the emphasis in the last two decades of the twentieth century on into the twenty first, when it was advocated that the youth in the church have separate meeting and function locations. This worked well until the time that the youth were beginning to be more independent, and they found that essentially there was nowhere for them to go. This was largely because in

reality the two halves did not connect. Often, they hardly knew each other. A real disconnect with the youth and the older members had taken place. Root (2015) said, “There is a great fear that those between the ages 18 and 25 have little interest in church, and that the church has failed to convince them to stay” (p. 36).

The old models of doing youth ministry as a stand-alone ministry linked to the local church are not working anymore. Clark (2016) asked why so many active youth ministry graduates walk away from faith after high school. Why is it that so many seem to graduate from youth group and graduate from church at the same time? He concluded that youth ministry must begin to practice as a “holistic partnership between youth ministry, congregational leaders, parents and the congregation at large.” In answer to his questions, he added that “the trend toward intergenerational relationships is obviously a theologically and psychosocially positive trajectory” (p. 17).

Searching for a Solution

During the past decade in Australia, there has been a growing realization that millennials are voting with their feet and walking away from church life. From this, a number of Christian organizations, led by the Bible Society of Australia, have initiated an “on-the-road church consultation process” to endeavor to find a solution to the “mass exodus” of youth and millennials from church life. This consultation process saw most of Australia’s major denominations given an opportunity to join the conversation in the form of a road trip to every state of Australia. While the Australian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was not an official active participant, all of the resource material was made readily available to all Christians whatever their persuasion. SDA youth mirror very closely Christians from other denominations. Day-long conversations with youth workers, pastors, and youth specialists were held in each capital city and a website Here2Stay (2016) has been set up to continue the conversation and document the findings. From these hundreds of hours

of consultation around Australia, two concepts were put forward: intergenerational connections and family household nurture.

In reality, as it stands, there appears to be an implicit problem with this finding. It seems that there has been no real distinction between the concept of message and messenger. Each message clearly needs a messenger, but not every person that fits the term intergenerational or mentor, or household is a suitable messenger. The message that they carry and project may itself be part of the problem. A real issue is not just the finding of generational/intergenerational, mentor and household candidates, it is the finding and training of these to know what the message needs to be and then how to convey that message to modern millennial youth. This opens the way for my research survey questionnaire that will provide not a top-down set of rules and principles, but rather a bottom-up approach that facilitates the millennials to state their own case. One real concern from the youth perspective is that too many of the traditional SDA churches think that they have the right and true answer. It will therefore be an undergirding principle that guides in the formation of the survey questions. It will endeavor to plumb the deeper insights and desires of the youth and young adults themselves from their perspective and in their voice.

Intergenerational Connections, Mentoring and Discipleship

Hughes, Reid, and Fraser (2015 and 2016), from the Christian Research Association, completed a 14-year study of Australian youth culture and its religious and spiritual connections. This study included a focus on spiritual development within 60 youth groups around Australia. It was not in any way a parochial study, it dealt with a wide spectrum and was an open piece of research that was widely inclusive. There is clearly an overlap with some of their findings, but it is a broader and wider task.

Two significant findings in the area of intergenerational connections were shown. First, the quality of the relationship between youth leaders and other adult/mentors in the

youth setting is foundational to youth ministry and, second, that parents need to be an integral part of the youth ministry picture if we want to see real success in youth ministry.

Hughes, Reid, and Fraser (2015 and 2016) maintain that collaboration between youth ministry and the local church is crucial for individual growth and spiritual survival. In the majority of the youth groups that were studied, it was plain to see that most members in the church had little or no idea what was happening in the youth ministry setting. There was a major disconnect. Names were not known and family connections had not been made. In many churches, youth services were separate from the main congregation. This situation was a consequence of decades of separating the youth from the rest of the church. On the flip-side were those congregations that had made the connection via mentor/mentee relationships or through service projects. Put simply, a bond had been formed that had allowed the youth and young adult ministry to grow stronger.

This disconnect, which was/is evident in many churches, is a major dilemma facing youth ministry in Australia, the United States, and many Western countries. What if a much stronger intergenerational mentoring partnership was introduced into the local church? Would we see millennials with a worthwhile engagement in church life as they moved from adolescence toward emerging adulthood? Powell and Clark (2011) thought so. Research from Fuller Theological Seminary discovered a strong correlation between mentor/mentee relationships and youth and millennial engagement in church life in later years. This research showed that if a 5:1 ratio of five adults to one youth is adopted in a child's younger years in the church setting and continued through to emerging adulthood, a stronger engagement in church life and more in-depth spiritual connection will take place. This 5:1 ratio is adults who simply care in the local church, investing in the kids of the church. This investment can vary between a little, medium or large amount of time. The key is time and longevity, creating a sticky web that surrounds the young people as they move toward emerging adulthood.

How then do we develop godly mentors for the younger generations of our churches? Joiner, Bomar, and Smith (2010) pointed out that many adults have no idea how to be a mentor—especially in the Christian sense. There needs to be the development of mentor-trainers, who can in a practical way train others with the skills and the ideologies needed. Two things need to be taken into account. First, the mentor-to-mentee relationship must not have a controlling agenda. This relationship must look at the mentee as a person and not a project. Questions that need to be asked include “What is God already doing here?” rather than “What should God begin doing here?” (p. 62). Second, the mentor must be able to understand the difference between spiritual maturity and maturing. Each person comes to faith from a different starting point. In every relationship, people are either moving closer together or further apart and this is the same when moving toward God. One’s past experiences might mean that coming closer to God is a slow process. In response to this, the mentor needs to be able to celebrate with their mentee as they move forward with small increments of spiritual maturity. Maybe, one of the complicating issues is that maturity is not just age dependent. There are still many adults that have not matured themselves. Wonder, discovery and passion are key factors in this journey. Provoking discovery is also a critical part of the mentor/mentee relationship. The mentor might see mistakes being made but will resist the “this is how you do it” advice and instead ask questions that might help the mentee move out of harm’s way. It is important to resist the urge to fill in the blanks and realize that God is going to use broken moments in their life to help them discover who they are.

The real fuel for the mentee will come more from teachable moments. Coffeehouses and cafes, mission trips, and service projects will be the real fuel for growth in the mentor/mentee relationship and show that God can be real and discovered through regular interaction. Dodrill (2013) concurred by saying that Christ is present in our interpersonal encounters and that these encounters can only be authentic if all of our attempts to

“influence” the other is abandoned. Intergenerational connections are key in moving teens into emerging adults and keeping them in church life. Snailum (2012) noted that many youth pastors and churches realize that there are issues in this area of intergenerational connections but do not know what to do to build the connections between them. Some churches are even unsure or uneasy about building these connections. Others are asking “How can I get started?” or “How can I get the rest of the congregation involved in this?” It is often easier to ask these questions than to find the answers. One real question in the mentor/mentee relationship relates to the issue of continuance. Is the mentee sometimes a passive functionary that only receives and does not give? Will a person that has been facilitated as a mentee at some future time become a mentor themselves?

Snailum’s (2012) research findings highlight a number of areas. First, that intergenerational community must be a core value. This is much more than a youth ministry initiative. This requires a paradigmatic shift in philosophy and core values. In reality it needs to be demonstrated not just theorized. Efforts to create an intergenerational community must be an integral part of everything the church is, including its vision, mission, and purpose: “Making such a shift requires overcoming an individualistic cultural mind-set and developing a community mind-set wherein all generations and ministry departments are valued and deeply involved with each other in significant ways throughout the church body” (p. 168). “Growing Together” (see appendix F) addresses this very issue. Maybe, one of the underlying problems is that the more conservative the church, the more it seeks to get the theological cognitive answers correct, and in the process forgets that the youth and young adults need the more basic issues of love, care, concern, justice, and care.

Second—and in considering the first—there must not be a swing away from age-specific ministry in the local church setting:

Believing in intergenerationality does not mean we swing to the other end taking away all separate programming events. . . . There is a healthy balance allowing youth

to be youth, but the local church has separated too far and we need to bring intergenerational concepts back to the understanding of our ecclesiology. (Snailum, 2012, p. 169)

All generations need their “own” space to grow and develop at their own pace, but everyone needs to be a part of the “web” or network of relationships that includes both peers and members of other generations. Arbitrary rules will probably not work. At specific times there will be a need for special occasions that may require more age-related activities, at other times not so much. Maybe, the fundamental question is, are these specific times meeting the needs and therefore enabling a more relaxed meeting together of the wider age diverse groups?

Intergenerational balance in ministry will not be successful unless all of the leadership is fully invested in what is happening. Any change lives or dies with the leadership. After the paradigmatic shift is decided on, the process of change can be small at first. Assessing the current conditions and beginning with existing structures is the key. If small groups exist, begin by initiating some intergenerational connections into what is there. Identify “movers and shakers” who already have an intergenerational mind-set. Education processes need to take place. In many church communities intergenerational activities already function to some degree. These include such activities as Pathfinders and Sabbath School divisions. In churches there is often good care until the child reaches the teens, but then the problems of care versus control seem to take over. Many adults forget that they were once youth themselves.

The congregation has no chance of understanding how intergenerational church life can take place if they are not shown regularly why it is important and then shown how it is important in a variety of ways. The reciprocal benefits of this ministry should be shown from multiple perspectives. These perspectives include the developmental needs of the various age groups, the biblical basis for the new intergenerational community, and the value it places on

all contexts of learning and spiritual formation. According to Snailum (2012) and her research team, the key is to continue to be intentional and strategic. Age-stratified ministry will not happen by accident. It requires intentionality to initiate and sustain it. Leaders must have a strong desire to see this become a part what church is:

The end goal is not to just have generations rub shoulders . . . but the goal is maturity in Christ while fulfilling the “one another” commands together. Meeting a felt need is a great starting point, but we must move to intentional discipleship. (p. 172)

Some of the praxis of this intergenerational ministry is seen in Case’s (2013) Mission Lifeguard model. The metaphor of losing young lives to the world because we have no “lifeguards” in the church is dominant in his thinking. Case himself would assert that this lifeguard model is primarily preventative, but also can include rescue. How can we introduce intergenerational thinking into our churches but not implement safeguards or “lifeguards” in the church? How do we save our teens, youth, and millennials from drowning spiritually? Case said this is about saving lives: “It’s about church people connecting with young people who are drowning or missing. It’s about connecting young people with Jesus, the abundant life giver” (p. 11).

Case broke the Mission Lifeguard model into three basic units. These units include the need for spotters, lifeguards, and resources. Put simply, spotters are people in the church who are continually on the lookout for youth and millennials who might be drowning or missing. The spotter then alerts the lifeguard and the lifeguard responds accordingly. In some cases, the spotter and lifeguard might be the same person but it is preferable to have a number of spotters and lifeguards in each church.

The lifeguard’s role is to tap into the life of the person who might be drowning or missing, and make connections with them. If previous connections have been made, this task is easier than if they had not. The ability to connect with the young person is a critical quality of the lifeguard. In this model, resources mean people, the rest of the community who are

needed to play their part in the team that makes up the complete cycle of mission lifeguard. This model has a simplicity, which makes it easy to establish, but a depth that makes it very effective in any church that is looking to develop an intergenerational community.

Goodwin (2013) maintained that many older church members are not aware of impact for both good and bad that they can have on children and young people in the church. Young people who had left the church said consistently that they felt little or no connection with the adults of the church when they were young. Bailey Gillespie and Timothy Gillespie (2011) demonstrated that intergenerational connections must involve three significant things. These are: building genuine relationships that are filled with love for the younger generations; allowing younger generations to have a significant role in the life of the church; and equipping youth and millennials with the tools they need to survive life. According to their research, these happen through mentor/mentee relationships. It is important to allow faith-talk or stories of success in your faith to abound in life and all intergenerational connections.

Gane (2009) stated this and added that, in an endeavor to stop the hemorrhaging of the church, we need to start caring for the youth that we already have. Simple things like learning the names of the youth and millennials, and surrounding them with social support and a loving, caring environment. This process is not a one-sided thing, both older and younger persons need to have some degree of intentionality. An isolationist attitude is not beneficial to both the young and the old. These things are much more important than they might seem at face value:

You cannot overstate the power of the presence of a caring adult in the life of the young person, someone who really cares and supports the youth through the good and bad times. (p. 63)

Oestreicher and Morgan (2012), who focus specifically on young males, proposed from their research that:

It's becoming more and more important to have God-honoring men investing in our sons, men who are carving a pathway for them to follow. They need men who love

deeply and are living the way of Jesus. . . . They need men who don't just talk about faith but are actually living it. . . . God-honoring "action heroes" are needed (p. 15).

Kidder and Doorland (2021) build a strong case challenging churches to make sure that their mentoring processes are in place when it comes to working with males in particular.

They stated:

The top solution we discovered is simple: young men need older male mentors. If you want to see more young men engaged in church attendance, find dedicated men in your congregation who can intentionally mentor preteen boys through their young adult years. Mentoring was the common denominator among all the young men interviewed who were still engaged in church. (p. 42)

Barna (2016) supported the concept that caring adults can effectively reach youth and young adults through the youth ministry program of the local church. Ultimately, youth workers, parents and staff must build genuine relationships with younger members of the church and, through this, gain insights into their needs and spiritual condition.

The real key to intergenerational connection is longevity. In his book *The Orphaned Generation*, Wilcher (2013) called these long-term mentors "wise guides:"

Without them young people are delaying their entrance into adulthood. . . . This Wise Guide is the solution to the lonely cry of most young people's hearts: Who will care enough to walk into this mess I call my life and give me some direction? Who will help me become the man or woman God designed me to be? (p. 100).

Wise guides need to be that: both wise and guide. They must be able to see the potential in the mentee or younger mind and gently lead them on a journey toward their destiny. This is a long-term commitment undertaken by the wise guide. Generational tensions can be a great challenge for churches who undertake this paradigm shift in thinking and make intergenerational connections key in the life of their church. There needs to be an active process that enables mentors and mentees to have flexibility. It could/should be that former mentees themselves become mentors, keeping alive the dynamic of a caring church. Even churches that have intentionally moved forward with their mentoring programs and their intergenerational connections can find it difficult to sustain.

Hammett and Pearce (2007) argued that we can't just sit on the side line and expect that this new model will flourish. Generations will collide as we undertake the change. It would be easier to simply give up and go back to what we had instead of putting the effort into change. They noted a number of things that will be stumbling blocks. Often people do not want to have to work hard at something; their compelling vision is lacking or even non-existent; mediocrity is the expectation; churches take a paternalistic approach to leading millennials and often refuse to let them lead; mentoring is not important in the life of the church; community is not highly valued, and ultimately the church is a place of division and lack of unity.

Brown (2014) completed a research project in which she studied the correlation between adolescent church experiences and emerging adult church-based retention. Some of the findings included the need to be a part of a thriving youth group early in the adolescent years. This impacted their continued involvement in church life. Relationships forged are instrumental in continued church involvement. One of the important findings in this research showed that nearly every participant could point to a good relationship with another person that tied them to the church as teens and then emerging adults. Many of these worthwhile relationships were listed as an impact of mentors or adult friends. The phrase "living life together" was key during the adolescent years. It was interesting that none mentioned "flashy, over the top, elaborate events, Bible studies, or worship experiences as instrumental in their continued church involvement." In summary, Brown contended "that opportunities to spend time together, forge meaningful relationships, and to participate in ministry in meaningful ways impacted their lives as adolescents and carried over to emerging adulthood" (p. 9).

As we look at some of the implications from these findings, we discover that churches must encourage congregants to invest in the lives of the younger generation. This investment is invaluable to future church participation and retention. Churches must find ways to involve

teenagers in the life of the church, build mentor/mentee relationships, appreciate the value of service, build community by living life together through outreach, mission trips, and other projects.

Erlacher (2014) contended that gulfs of misunderstanding developed between the various age cohorts, and that communication and clarification regarding differences and worldviews become critical and must be understood. To help a church really understand how to make intergenerational connections progress, they must work toward understanding the major differences in thinking between the generations. Things like work/life balance are necessary. Generally, for millennials, personal life trumps work, however there are many variations within each millennial when compared one to the other. Growth and advancement for millennials could mean having many different jobs over a short period because they did not meet their expectations, whereas some of them worked one job for many years. Differing views on leadership and authority is another important area. Millennials choose who they will follow. A leader and boss must earn respect, regardless of title and position. Older generations gave respect because of position and title. Technology and communication is used in radically different ways as well. While older generations use it and even master it, millennials employ it and make it work for them. These major differences must be understood and talked about within the church community. Lack of understanding how the generations think and act will cause division and often push the church into a position where they say, "Let's go back to what we once had." See APPENDIX A for thumbnail sketch of the various generations with their variety of approaches to life and existence.

Powell, Mulder, and Griffin (2016) developed six core commitments to help young people discover and love their church. Here, there is evidence of something that works. There are some churches that are doing the things that meet the needs of youth and young adults. These six ways could be considered as a model to follow, and at least they would be a guide

map toward worthwhile and effective pathways. From all this research, they suggested they had discovered six essential strategies to help young people discover and love their church.

First, there is the concept of unlocking “keychain leadership.” That means instead of centralizing authority, empower others—especially young people.” Second, “empathize with today’s young people. Instead of judging or criticizing, step into the shoes of this generation.” Third, they suggest “taking Jesus’ message seriously. Instead of asserting formulaic gospel claims, welcome young people into a Jesus-centered way of life.” Fourth, “fuel a warm community. That means instead of focusing on cool worship or programs, aim for warm peer and intergenerational friendships.” Five, “prioritize young people (and families) everywhere.” This means that without being patronizing youth and young adults should be facilitated and enabled to mature, and develop within the church. Six, “be the best neighbors. Instead of condemning the world outside your walls, enable young people to neighbor well locally and globally (Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, 2016, p. 43).

These six essential strategies align with the two foundational pillars that were listed earlier in the chapter. The first aligns particularly well with the need for Intergenerational connections via mentoring and service. To a lesser extent the second, that of providing family household nurture is still important. A church cannot “unlock keychain leadership” without intergenerational connections. This leadership will only be temporary if regular mentor/mentee relationships are not fostered. A church cannot “fuel a warm community” if intergenerational connections are non-existent. A church cannot “be the best neighbor” if its membership, both young and old combined, cannot serve their community together.

Service and Cause

Today’s generation of teenagers and young adults are more open and willing to serve than those before them. Mueller (2011) believed that we must discourage the self-centered materialistic ways that are fed to our teens, youth, and millennials, and enable them to get

involved with mission and service. There is a twofold benefit that flows from serving when we take them on mission trips or service projects. These trips enable them to grow in both their faith and mentor/mentee relationships that we have seen are vital for their spiritual survival.

White (2014) placed great emphasis on what he calls “cause.” There has been a major change in thinking in the past decade with regard to “cause” or serving others. With the “rise of the nones”—those who no longer see religion as relevant in their life, “cause” has been an opening that has allowed the “nones” to be introduced to God. It was only a decade ago that the unchurched would move along a continuum from unchurched to community to Christ to “cause.” Now we see that this model no longer works, and “cause” is what is the game-changer. “Nones” are motivated and passionate about “cause,” and will move by experiencing this to community and to Christ much easier than any other way: “Today it is ‘cause’ that arrests the attention of the world” (pp. 99-100).

From a purely secular point of view, Winograd and Harris (2011) realized the significance of “cause”: “A record number of millennials are acting on their belief in collective action by signing up for community service to help those in need” (p. 26). Gibson (2004) stated that “congregations can foster connectivity between teenagers and the larger church body by planning adult/youth service projects” (p. 11).

Corbett and Fikkert (2012) took the challenge even further. When millennials serve with some type of missional engagement, we often believe that we are helping to alleviate poverty or something similar. Instead, we must see that we are all “broken individuals” and that we are all at the same broken level needing reconciliation. Engaging in meaningful mission is not done to or for people, but with people. This meaningful mission is about building relationships.

Powe Jr., and Smothers (2015) added, “We do not engage in mission to prove our goodness. We engage in mission and social activism to be in ministry with God’s people on God’s behalf” (p. 95). Rainer and Geiger (2011) described service as part of a discipleship process. They shared Immanuel Baptist Church’s model of “Connecting, Growing, Serving.” They endeavored to connect people to God and others. These “connecting believers” were challenged to become “growing believers” and finally the “growing believers” committed to become “serving believers.” In the Immanuel church, everyone uses the same terminology of “Connect, Grow, Share,” and the results of growth have been explosive.

When I looked for practical examples of serving and “cause,” I needed to look no further than STORMCo (Service To Others Really Matters). STORMCo was introduced in 1992, when a group of high school teachers and their chaplain from an Adventist high school decided to go into a community in outback Australia and simply serve that community. They had no agenda other than to serve. They would do whatever the community needed, and be the hands and feet of Jesus. They consulted with local councils and people groups, and spent eight days caring for and loving the community. Since 1992, STORMCo has caught the attention of tens of thousands of youth and young adults. A team will adopt a town, and go back every year for seven to 10 days. This adventure in service is built on the five foundations of no agenda, no walls, no expectations, no fear, and no limits (STORMCo Journal, 2010). Having been youth director in two Australian conferences over a 15-year period, I had seen first-hand the impact that STORMCo has had on the lives of youth and millennials. Each year across Australia, more than 800 youth and young adults are involved.

Parenting and Household Connections

DeVries (2004) states that young people who are growing in their faith as emerging adults were teenagers who fit into one of two categories. First, that they came from families in which Christian growth was modelled in at least one of their parents or, second, that they

had developed a meaningful connection with an extended family of adults within the church they attended. Family and household nurture are seen as foundational in its importance for youth retention (Here2Stay 2016).

DeVries (2004) challenged the church to understand that “family-based youth ministry is not a ‘new wing’ to be added to a church’s youth ministry ‘house’. It is not an optional enrichment program. Family-based youth ministry is a foundational model” (p. 115). Australian researchers Hughes, Reid, and Fraser (2015) contend that this family-based youth ministry of collaboration between youth leaders and parents must happen whenever possible: “Youth ministry built on collaboration will be much stronger than youth ministry that is developed at arm’s length from the parents” (p. 34).

Briggs (2014) summarized some of the significant data that arose from the latest wave of the National Study of Youth and Religion. Produced at the University of North Carolina with funding from the Lily Foundation and then on to Notre Dame. Christian Smith who took the program with him discovered that only 1% of teens aged 15 to 17 reared by parents who attached little importance to religion were still connected to religion in their mid to late 20s. By contrast, 82% of children raised by parents who talked about faith and attached great importance to their beliefs were still active as young adults. Smith, quoted in Briggs (2014), found that the connection is:

Nearly deterministic. . . . Nothing else comes remotely close to matching the influence of parents on the religious faith and practices of youth. Parents just dominate. . . . One of the strongest factors associated with older teens keeping their faith as young adults was having parents who talked about religion and spirituality at home. (pp. 17–18)

In a more recent text, Smith and Adamczyk (2021) strongly supported this information.

We can see from this that mothers and fathers have the greatest possible influence on their adolescents as they grow to emerging adults. Gibson (2004) noted that during the time

of adolescence we see teens making a degree of separation from their parents. But the influence that parents can have at this stage of the teen's life cannot be ignored:

Churches must strive to help families maintain, or in some cases, create an emotionally supportive environment in which teenagers feel comfortable enough to dialogue with their parents about faith-related issues. Only a small percentage of parents, however, report that their churches teach them how to mature the faith of their children (p. 10).

Parenting adolescents toward emerging adulthood is, no doubt, one of the hardest things parents will do in their lives. The terrain is constantly changing and issues are never-ending. Crawford (2010) challenged parents to be consistent and active, and to make sure they are sharing devotions and other spiritual disciplines to help them build the foundation of their growing faith. This interaction from parents and other caring adults must continue right through the adolescent years to the 20-somethings of emerging adults. However, this tends to be uncommon with SDA parents in Australia:

Parenting is not a job, it is a lifelong commitment to love, support, and encourage growth in our sons and daughters. It's a huge commitment and requires the support of both the church and other adults. (p. 189)

One of the key elements in growing adolescents is family. Barna (2016) highlighted the fact that spiritual development of children was first and foremost the responsibility of parents. He added that that church is best poised to help and lead in this process:

Drawing on biblical principles and precedent, these churches see themselves as serving families by providing emotional, spiritual, and material support to parents as they invest in the faith of their children. . . . The role of the church is to equip and reinforce rather than lead in this dimension. . . . Our goal is to become the greatest friend and best support a parent has ever had. (p. 106)

A successful church needs to function as a community of individuals that functions with all its members young, middle aged, and old. There is need for active care and facilitation of all groupings that will enable a working and workable cohesive entity. The church's goal is to add value to the parental process that is already in motion. This is not a competition or a battle for supremacy. The resources used by the church are designed to prepare parents for

greater effectiveness and advance the efforts being made by parents. This process is a symbiotic relationship between the church and parents, and if carefully coordinated will result in a “powerful two-fisted punch that has a synergistic impact on the children.” Smith and Denton (2005) stated, “The best way to get most youth more involved in and serious about their faith communities is to get parents more involved in and serious about their faith communities” (p. 107).

Chap Clark and Dee Clark (2008) laid out a model that helped the local church, and families within them, to have success in all the stages of the child’s development right through to emerging adulthood. They outlined five tasks that ran across all the developmental stages.

The first was understanding. To understand a child or adolescent, is the most foundational trait of all parent or leadership roles, it is critical to make sure that you are fully committed to working tirelessly at taking seriously the reality of the child’s life.

Next is showing compassion. Compassion comes via connection. It’s impossible to be compassionate from a distance. By being compassionate at either church or home, we acknowledge that we are the ones called to bring ourselves into their emotional and developmental processes.

Third is the area of boundaries. Implementing boundaries shows that the parents and leaders are willing to make sure that the child or adolescent is able to experience a proper amount of growth through the exercise of decision making.

Fourth is charting and guiding the course. How do we as leaders and parents teach the kids to chart the course of life? We are responsible for reading the charts, plotting the course, and pointing out the dangers as kids and adolescents navigate the turbulent waters as they move toward emerging adults. This is where the mentor/mentee relationship blossoms.

Lastly, they need to be launched into adulthood. The ultimate conclusion is to see the children make their way through the challenges of adolescence and enter into the adult community. This process is long term. It starts with a child. Adolescent development and faith development can work in parallel. There will be many and various incidents, twists and turns, failures and successes. There is no magic wand, it takes effort, love, care, resilience, and a lot of encouragement and always hopefully with good outcomes.

An alternate viewpoint, although not contradictory, has been presented by Powell and Argue (2019) in their book *Growing With* in that they have seen the need for parents to be able to “grow with” their teenagers and young adults. Their desire was to see them thrive in their faith, family, and future. Earlier in this chapter we discovered that the parent’s influence on religious faith and practices was so critical that they are “nearly deterministic” on the teen’s and young adult’s spiritual future. Powell and Argue see “growing with parenting” as a mutual journey of intentional growth for both the parents, the teens, and young adults, who all trust God to transform. At a basic level, it is not a question of either/or, rather it is more like both/and. Three key concepts are developed. They are: Thriving In Family: “WITHING”, Thriving in Faith: “FAITHING”, and Thriving in Future: “ADULTING.” (It is presumed that these non-words mean being with, encouraging faith development and facilitating maturation.) WITHING, put simply, is a family’s growth in supporting each other as children grow more independent. “At the heart of WITHING beats this truth: independence doesn’t mean total separation. The goal of mature independence is really interdependence: learning that we are made for relationships” (p. 74). FAITHING is a child’s growth in owning and living their own journey with God as they encounter new information and experiences: “FAITHING provides grace, explanations, and conversational spaces to explore the deeper questions that kids are asking. Faithing invites us to reengage our own faith journeys too” (p. 136). ADULTING is a child’s growth as they embrace opportunities to

shape the world around them. ADULTING is where relationally, they are learning to grow and deepen their friendships and romantic interests. Vocationally, they are discovering their true passions and real limitations as they consider their contribution to the world” (p. 200).

Summary

Two foundational principles stand out as being important enough to change the way the church does things in the local setting. These two foundation principles highlighted in the literature are ongoing intergenerational connections and strong family/household nurture. In reality, these two principles will remain the same whether we talk about millennials, next generation Z, or whatever name we give to the next generation.

In its present setting, youth ministry has been more of an island and there has been a major disconnect between the generations. To keep this millennial generation, strong ties need to be built between the generations over a long period of years. Generational connection does not mean that youth ministry specialties have to end. It is a both/and scenario that is needed here. According to the literature, mentor/mentee relationships will make a difference in church engagement. There is no quick fix here. These relationships have to be ongoing, less about agenda and more about the journey of discipleship together.

Alongside the mentor/mentee relationships is the necessity to allow the younger generations to “serve” and to get behind a “cause.” They need activity, not mere passivity. Strong parenting and household connections are vitally important in the local church if we want to see emerging adults survive church life. Families that are continually connecting with their children, teens, and youth will have a far greater chance of seeing their emerging adults stay and engage in church.

At this place in the project, the transition to the next chapter focuses on the development of the survey questionnaire. After the introduction, there will be an examination of important biblical themes, followed by literature review insights. All of these will

contribute to the development of a survey questionnaire that will also influence the intervention and its evaluation.

CHAPTER 4

THE DESCRIPTION OF MILLENNIAL ENGAGEMENT INTERVENTION

Introduction

One of the greatest challenges for the Seventh-day Adventist church in Australia is finding a way to engage millennials in church life. There is a desperate need for the development of an intervention in the area of millennial youth engagement in our churches. This chapter will endeavor to lay the foundations for such an engagement through the findings of an online Survey completed by Australian young adults. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section will summarize the lack of millennial engagement that we face and seek to integrate this with the findings of the literature in chapter three. The second section will overview the development of the intervention that will take place growing out of the combination of biblical insights, the literature review and the Survey with its 18 question profile. The final section outlines the research methodology and protocol.

Lack of Millennial Engagement

As noted earlier in chapters one, two, and three, millennial engagement within churches in Australia is at an all-time low. The current trend demands major changes so that the Seventh-day Adventist church in Australia can function much more effectively. The data points out that we are in a difficult situation. There is a mass exodus of young adults as they transition from high school to university or work life. In some circles the rate of exodus is up to 72%, but generally it ranges between 50 and 72% (Hughes, 2016). We also discovered in the literature review that there is a serious allegation made against

age-specific youth ministry. This assertion suggests that completely separating youth from adult congregations greatly inhibits the growth of sustainable faith beyond high school and therefore contributes to young adult church attrition (Black, 2008; Powell, 2009; Powell and Griffin, 2011; Joiner et al., 2010; Smith and Snell, 2009). A general observed tendency is that “teens decline in their level of faith and/or faith related practices as they enter late adolescence and adulthood and this fact should concern our youth pastors” (Snailum, 2012, p. 10). The literature review highlighted the issues of generational connections and the great value of family household nurture. It is evident that generational connections, incorporating mentoring, and family household attitudes has a critical part to play. Lanker (2010) stated “As children develop into their mid-adolescent years, roughly between ages 14-18, they develop an increasing need for non-parental relationships from which to discover their unique identity” (p. 67).

Mentoring is the key to the intergenerational link. When the youth ministry approach over the last few decades is analyzed, we discover that age-specific ministry has been strong in the churches in the western world. Age-specific ministry has unintentionally created a divide between the generations and not enabled intergenerational connections to develop within the church. Establishing an intergenerational community is often seen as foreign to the way we do things in the church. Griffin and Snailum (2011) proposed that we don't eradicate age-specific ministries in reaction to the problem:

As important as it is to embrace intergenerational values at a core level, it's also important to keep that in balance with age-specific ministry. We need to realize that exclusively age-specific ministry may be “working” to varying degrees, but has not proven sustainable for ongoing transmission of faith among adults who have grown up exclusively in youth ministries. At the same time, all ages still need their own space to grow and develop at their own pace. Everyone needs to be part of a web of relationships that includes their peers and members of other generations. (p. 4)

Combined Insights on Intervention

This church separation issue needs to be highlighted at this point because of the growing divide in thinking around age-specific ministry and a much broader intergenerational ministry. It is not a case of one or the other that is needed. It is a case that both have a part to play and in reality cannot be separated. In many churches this is a major shift in thinking.

The theological review, found in chapter two, aligns closely with the findings of chapter three. Intergenerational connections and mentoring appear throughout the Bible. But the Bible also illustrates the opposite, in that some that received good mentoring, did not in return mentor others. There is a very close alignment with some great examples of biblical characters showcasing intergenerational connections and mentoring. Also, we find that family household nurture, at its best, is strong in biblical Hebrew settings. When families take the time to engage with their children there are often good outcomes. Our desire is that, through the Survey questions we will discover if this is the case in the Australian setting.

Other big questions confront us and need to be answered. What is the reason that millennials disengage from church life? Are there some key indicators that will steer us in a new direction? Is there a way to make sure that millennials are connected and engaged in church life in their younger years which will in turn hold their levels of engagement as they transition from high school to university, and work life? The answers to these questions will help deliver a way forward for millennial engagement in church life in Australia.

Description of Planned Intervention

The development of the online Survey needed to carefully cover a number of areas. An opportunity needed to be given for the respondents to share the impact that interaction with others has had on their life. This Survey needed to examine the impacts church life had on them as they moved through the years as millennials. The one answering could choose to answer quickly or they could spend as long as they chose. Those that answered the Survey quickly tended to stay with the quantitative side of the survey, while those that took more time certainly gave quantitative information but they added greatly to the qualitative side of the survey. There was room to write personal insights. It needed to be a document where all users could feel comfortable and happy, where they could respond quickly or with a more considered response. Hence, a combination of tick box and short statement answers was used.

This online survey was planned to focus on ages 18-37 that had an existing connection with the SDA church in Australia. The actual survey was developed when I, Jeffrey Parker, went to my father and step-mother's place of residence to think, discuss, and develop the questionnaire. Both of them have PhDs: my father (Ed Parker) in education and more importantly my step-mother (Glennys Parker) in psychology. Glennys has four degrees that had bearing on my research: two bachelor degrees, one in sociology/anthropology and one in psychology. She also has an honors degree in psychology, as well as a research psychology PhD (awarded in 2004).

Primarily, the survey would give an opportunity for the millennial youth and young adults to give feedback on how their generation understood and functioned in the world and in the church. The youngest age group surveyed is technically on the boundary between the millennials and generation Z, there is some overlap and wiggle room here. It is thought that this age group might have shown if there is any early indication of change

happening in the transition from millennial to Z. This however has not been dealt with, up to the present moment, because it was deemed as being outside the scope of this present DMin project. Another reason for starting with 18 year olds was that it would have caused quite a deal of problem trying to justify to the younger set (18-21) why they had been excluded if the survey started with 22 year olds. This situation could well now present a good reason for doing another survey within the next eighteen months.

This current survey was planned to take place in the first four months of 2019 via Survey Monkey. It was anticipated that the collected data and the research gathered in the literature review would at some time be compared and analyzed. It would be both important and worthwhile to see how and why some millennials engaged in church life and some did not. For example, has what happened to them in their junior, teen, and youth years had an impact on their engagement levels as millennials or young adults?

The online survey was planned to begin with important introductory questions dealing with demographic and generational placement while maintaining anonymity of all participants. Firstly, their age range was asked. They would be given four options (18-21, 22-25, 26-31, and 32-37). The last three age groups fit into the millennial age group and ranges between approximately 22 and 37 years of age. The youngest age group (18-21) are those who have just become adults and are technically from generation Z.

Question two asked the respondent about their gender. It has often been assumed that females are generally more spiritual and involved in church life than males. It will be able to determine if the youth fit the assumed model or if there is some difference.

Question three asked the respondent their ethnicity. Australia's largest population group is Caucasian. There are also the indigenous Australians called Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders. Sadly, these two groups have been marginalized and treated as second-class citizens for most of the time since Australia was colonized in the late 1700s.

Numbers of both Aborigine and Torres Strait Islanders are small within the church. Added to that is the fact that many south Pacific islanders classify themselves as either Polynesian or Melanesian even if they hold Australian citizenship. There is a large group of Polynesians in the bigger cities. This includes Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Many of the family connections in this cultural group are different to the average family connections in Australia. Traditional family connections can be very strong with these families and they are often living in close-knit communities doing much of life together. There is also a disconnect happening with second and third generation Pacific islanders when it comes to both church life and their families' cultural ways.

Question four focused on whether the respondent was employed or involved in a mix of part-time work or study. We wanted to see if the respondent held a job or was in the process of university still. There was also an opportunity for the respondent to tell us if they had another category not listed in our Survey. This could include things like voluntary work etcetera.

There were three more questions that helped us to gain an understanding of who the respondent is. Did they live in Australia? If so, did they live in a major city, a regional center, a rural area, or somewhere very remote. The answer to these questions will be cross checked as to their engagement in church life. Answers to the next question simply stated their marriage or relationship status. The first seven questions were designed to give important demographic data, while protecting individual anonymity.

At this point in the online survey we received information that told us much more about why or why not that individual is engaged in church life.

Question eight asked whether the respondent is still an attendee of church. They could simply answer with yes or no. If they answered with a no we will ask them to please describe why no is their answer. We did not give a yes alternative here because it was

considered that later questions would give insight as to why they were still coming. It was hoped that at this point we would begin to find out the respondents' feelings toward church.

Question nine asked about their church attendance. How often do they attend church? Is it weekly, monthly, special occasions, or used to attend but not anymore? If “not anymore” is chosen they are asked to please describe why that is the case. It is hoped that the respondents were open and start to share what it is that stopped them from attending. Question ten asked the respondent whether church had always been a positive experience for them or not. They were able to answer with either a yes or no. With this question they were asked to please describe their answer. What are the main reasons that church is either a positive or negative experience for them. Had church really been a good experience or had it been something less than acceptable?

The next question changes tack slightly and endeavors to find out more about how family has impacted the life of the respondent. Question eleven asked: Have your parents and/or other family members always been supportive and encouraging of your Christian experience? This question enabled the respondent to really open up when they were asked to please describe on either the yes or no answer. It is hoped that the respondent would open up and clearly state the impact their parents had on them. From previous research, it appears that many young adults feel that they have not been heard in and around the church (White, 2014).

Question twelve simply asked: What ways would you suggest that young adults could be supported and encouraged in the church today? The answers here helped us as researchers understand the desires of the millennial generation. One of the big statements given by millennials is that no one is willing to listen to them when they ask questions

(Kinnaman, 2016). At this point in the survey we were hoping that the respondent was ready to share some deeper thoughts with us.

The next question took it one step further: “If you had the opportunity to make some changes that would make the church more friendly for youth and young adults what would you change?”(See Appendix B, p. 102). The respondent has room to share their heart at this point.

The next questions gave the respondent an opportunity to share about mentoring/generational connections that have taken place in their life. What the survey was looking for is whether a mix of generations had really connected on a regular basis. Allen (2018) stated, “Intergenerational ministry occurs when a congregation intentionally combines the generations together in a mutual serving, sharing, or learning within the core activities of the church in order to live out being the body of Christ to each other and the greater community” (p. 5). This question was testing to see if intergenerational connections have happened in the life of the respondent.

Question fourteen stated, “Apart from your family, have there been other people that have been supportive and encouraging of your Christian experience?” (Appendix B, p. 102). The respondent could answer yes or no. Both of these answers will have a please describe section after their answer.

Question fifteen was a question that only allowed a positive answer. This is the first time in the online survey that this is the case. The question was: What aspects of church life do you most appreciate? If someone had had a totally bad experience this will be seen in all of the above answers. This question is designed to test whether some positive experiences could still be remembered and described even if the majority of their journey is negative. If there was nothing positive to say at this point I imagine that this section would be left blank.

Question sixteen tested the respondents engagement levels. It asks, Have you been, or are you currently involved in, church life? The survey gives the respondent the opportunity to either say yes or no to this question. If yes is the answer they were asked to describe what roles they currently have or have had in the past. If they answered no they will be asked if they would consider having an active role in church life. This question is designed to get the respondent to think about their own engagement levels in church. By asking them to consider a role in the future this Survey is challenging future church engagement.

The survey came to completion with the question which asks: Do you have any further comments? (Appendix B, p. 103).

The biggest challenge with any survey is to get it into the hands of the right people and then to get them to complete it. It was therefore decided that the best approach to make the survey practically functional was to use Survey Monkey. It must be remembered that the survey will be conducted under the control of the Union Conference and that the nine local conferences therefore will participate in a supporting role. Here is how the invitation to participate in the Survey will operate. The survey will come from the office of Jeff Parker, and he will open the invitation to participate through his 450 person data base of active youth and young persons. Also, in his social media pathways the number will be increased by another 1,400 persons. It is recognized that there will be some overlap in numbers, but it is anticipated it will be in excess of 1250 persons initially contacted. This will be further increased when each youth director in the nine conferences uses their social media to invite participation. From here on in, it should expand as the youth themselves talk to others of the survey. Realistically the numbers of youth that will become aware of the survey will probably be in the order 2,500 to 3000. It is anticipated that more responses will come from the social media component. Because the survey will be conducted

anonymously, and because the results will come from Survey Monkey directly to the office of the Australian Union Conference, there is no way of determining from which conference each participant will come. The Survey guarantees the privacy of each participant, hence no names and no addresses will be given. Complete and total anonymity will be guaranteed at all times. The only data of location will be when they answer the question as to whether they live in a major city, a regional center, a rural area, or somewhere very remote.

Each message of invitation will be accompanied with an active link. Survey Monkey will record as many answers as the respondent completes and save them. Therefore, if the survey is not completed we will still see where the respondent answers to, up to the question they complete. One major principle will undergird the approach to the survey: to get as many returns as possible, without in any way pre-empting those answers.

Research Methodology and Protocol

The survey intervention will be evaluated and compared with the theological insights gained from chapter two and the literature review of chapter three. Then the results will be reported using an appropriate research methodology and protocol.

The purpose of this research project will be to explore what relationship, if there is any, between intergenerational connections and the development of stronger faith connections that will facilitate and enable the young adult to engage in church life. The survey we hope will give some insight into the effectiveness of intergenerational connections and how they will have impacted upon the life of the respondent. It also sought to discover whether a past strong family connection will have had any effect on current millennial engagement and mentoring components.

Confidentiality

All participants will be 18 years of age or older. If anyone is under that age, their survey response will be removed. It will be made clear to the participants that by submitting a survey participants will have given their consent. This consent will outline the purpose of the study, the duration of the study, the benefits and risks of the study. It will also outline that the study is totally voluntary and that all information will be completely confidential. Being an online survey the researcher will not have access to the names of the participants. Data collected will be stored on a password protected hard drive at Head Office, Seventh-day Adventist Church, 289 Maroondah Highway, Ringwood, Victoria 3134. Any hard copy material will be kept in a locked cabinet in the same location. The research has been authorized by the appropriate IRB verification. (See APPENDIX C and APPENDIX B.)

Data Analysis

All data will be received by an online survey accessed by Survey Monkey. Everyone who takes part in the Survey will have complete anonymity. All collected data will be collated and then evaluated. All of the written answers will be individually read and appropriately incorporated into the final outcome. A question has been raised as to whether a participant could enter more than one return. Survey Monkey has clearly set up their own protocols of guaranteeing as much as is humanly possible the quality of their service. Clearly that is the primary reason why a professional quality survey company was employed to do the task.

Implementation of the Intervention

Once the survey data have been analyzed and added to the information gleaned from the theological reflection and the review of pertinent literature, an intervention strategy called “Growing Together” will be implemented and evaluated in five of the conferences and some

90 churches across the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia. An evaluation of the implementation has been and will continue to take place at each of the summits that have taken place and will continue to take place in the future. Reports from each church involved are given which show both the positive and negative aspects of the implementation. (see appendix K).

Summary

This chapter has pointed out the planned pathway and has sought to address three perspectives: 1) the question of millennial membership loss in the Australian SDA church; 2) the interface between the biblical theology chapter, the literature review chapter, and the Survey; and 3) the research methodology and protocols. In the following chapter there will be a presentation of the implementation of the planned process.

CHAPTER 5

THE REALIZATION OF THE PLAN

Introduction and Themes

For over twenty years, I have been working with SDA youth and young adults in Australia. There were a number of issues that surfaced as we planned to revitalize the work in the Youth Departments of the nine local conferences in the Australian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The apparent worst of these was the COVID-19 pandemic that involved the whole world. Problems multiplied in Australia because each state determined its own rules, and at times there were clashes between state and state, as well as between the Federal Government and state governments. Our Union Head Office is in Victoria, and the premier there was probably as tough as any in stopping movements of people, in stopping persons going to work, in demanding that persons stay in their own places of residence, with virtually no physical contact with others. Each day the rules seemed to change, and one could not move about too much even if the rules were relaxed. Because of exclusion problems, one may not be able to return without 14 or more days of quarantine. These control issues were operating for most of 2020 and 2021. What seemed like a problem of high proportions turned out to be handled creatively by the youth and young adults. Of real interest was the fact that we were able in the modern IT world to function with ZOOM meetings, modern iPhones and all of the social media to maintain regular contact. As already stated, one of the characteristics of the so-called millennials is that they are into the digital world. They have been referred to as digital natives.

Questions have been raised as to whether the Survey generated the series of programs that took place in the Australian Union Conference (AUC), or whether they were contemporary events that facilitated and enabled each other. Obviously, the questions for the Survey (presented in APPENDIX B) were already formulated prior to the IRB approval that was given on the 13th of November 2018 (See APPENDIX C). In reality, it turns out that the two were tending to function in parallel. It was initially planned to have the Survey in the first quarter of 2019, but it was six months later that it was sent out in Survey Monkey. The Youth Engagement Summit recommendations were voted by the Australian Union Conference on May 18, 2018, as a set of recommendations for the church in Australia (see APPENDIX D). This was a specific set of recommendations for every part of the church in Australia, from the local church to conference and union levels. It was the beginning of the process that was to set in place genuine action in reaching out to the millennials of the SDA church. There were nine major focus points. Special prayer was engaged in, directed toward the spiritual growth of the children of SDA families. But it didn't stop with the children, youth and young adults, it encompassed the whole family. One certain truth is that the quality of the family life frequently determined the spiritual outcomes. With this concept in mind the next move was to enable good intergenerational interface—not just same age peer relationships, but also between old and young. A concerted effort was made to get the whole church working in the best possible way to function together in facilitating our youth. Then there was the sense of discipleship, empowering all to become active members, not just passive recipients. There was a move to enable support for what is called “keychain leadership” which works on the principle of develop, foster and support. We would encourage and support this kind of ministry. This led into a sense of facilitating the whole church, but particularly the youth and young adults, into meaningful leadership and community service. There was yet another focus to enable church, school and home, where

possible, to work in harmony together. This was a good start for engagement with the millennials.

Two things were to determine our speed; one was the necessity of adequate funding, and the other was to move at a speed that kept the church with us, not too far ahead of them or behind. Adequate funding came, and as the funding came and the time was judged to be right, effective progress was made. Soon after the funds became available we changed the title of the task to be “Growing Young Churches Australia.” This began to function in February 2020 and coincided with the reading and assessing of the Survey. So, in effect the two were developing in parallel, but some material was already beginning to filter through from the Survey.

It had been anticipated that the Survey Monkey questionnaire, which we called simply “the Survey” would operate in the first quarter of 2019, however, it was six months later in the last part of 2019 that the Surveys were being answered. A number of factors contributed to this delay. One was the issue of finance. There was little point in running a Survey if there was no continuing financial support to implement the findings of that Survey. Another was the rumblings in the world about a pandemic likelihood that evolved into COVID 19. But it did get started and some 424 responses were received. It not only gave quantitative data, but there were some 30,000 written words that gave a range of qualitative material. Some wrote short answers, others spent time in drafting well written responses that gave insight to their perspectives. The average response was 70 words per Survey (See APPENDIX B and APPENDIX C.)

Adventists Australia Growing Together Cohort was co-hosted by Fuller Youth Institute, the South Pacific Division, the Australian Union Conference, Greater Sydney Conference, and the Queensland Conference. Pastor Alina van Rensburg (2020) stated, “The ‘Growing Together’ journey is about passing on the legacy from one generation to the next.

It's a cultural shift that moves youth and young adult ministry from the periphery to the heart of the local church where everyone can thrive" (Appendix F, p. 126). Benjamin Lundquist said, "At the heart Growing Young is a learning journey for cultural change, breathing life and vitality into the local church, while uniting all generations together for the cause of Christ" (Appendix F, p. 126). The fact sheet also included endorsements from the South Pacific Division President Pastor Glen Townend, and Australian Union Conference Director Pastor Jeff Parker.

The foundations of "Growing Together" are based on the Growing Young research from Fuller Theological Seminary. There are six essential strategies to help young people discover and love their church. This was taking shape and began functioning from February 2020. These six core elements are: 1) to unlock keychain leadership which diversifies and empowers others as leaders; 2) empathize with and don't judge and criticize the youth, step into their shoes; 3) have a Jesus-centered way of life, not just some formulaic gospel claims; 4) fuel a warm community and intergenerational friendships; 5) prioritize young people and families and involve them in church life; and 6) function as best neighbors, locally and globally, and do not criticize and condemn the world outside. (See APPENDIX E, APPENDIX F, APPENDIX G, APPENDIX H, and APPENDIX I.)

This process has been very favorably accepted by the AUC and it has become an important part of the next five years of planning within the Union Conference. It is now of benefit that we reflect on what we have seen happening, what is still taking place, and what it is hoped will continue to do so.

First, and this is foundational, the youth and young adults have affirmed in their oral comments to me, and to the local conference youth directors, that the church is not just going through a document production activity; they have started listening to us. What is more, they have taken notice and they have begun to implement some of our insights and suggestions. In

chapter six we will return to this in two ways: In our conclusions and in our recommendations. It is an important insight that has been youth generated.

Secondly, and this touches at the heart of the matter, what has really been of high importance is that the church needs to have much more of a grace-based approach to its theology and its application of a practical and caring religion, and not a rules-controlled system. It has become evident that some of the older generations have seen what might be called a legalistic rules approach as the correct and right pathway, whereas the millennials have been much more motivated by a model of being a Christian that loves Jesus. They are not talking of a Christian in name only, but also in life, one that functions on the basis of justice and care.

Thirdly, the millennials want to see in the understanding and application of the SDA 28 fundamental doctrines its interpretation and application in a kind and caring way. Certainly, there should be a place and space that allows for Christian forgiveness when mistakes are made.

Fourthly, the survey has given traction to what some insightful leaders in the youth departments of the AUC have been saying.

In 2020, five conferences around Australia (Greater Sydney, North New South Wales, South Queensland, Western Australia, Victoria), set out on the Growing Together journey. This was the implementation stage of the intervention. The first year started off with around 90 churches Australia wide. Each church involved was asked to select a team of eight to ten key leaders from their churches to be a part of two corporate summits that year. The first summits around Australia had more than 500 key leaders in attendance. These summits ran over two weekends in the five conferences. There was a huge amount of excitement on the ground about cultural change, and the empowerment of the next generation taking place in the local church. Senior youth directors, people with over 20 years-experience, were saying

things like: “Finally a tool that can help the local church get some traction with young people” (Gigliotti, 2023, personal email). Unfortunately, two weeks, or so, after the Summit, COVID 19 took us all by surprise and rapidly slowed down regular church life. This no doubt had an impact on the Growing Together journey. However, we persisted through the midst of COVID and finished the year -2020. As the first year was interrupted for Churches, we then moved the same group of Churches through a second-year process, in 2021, to bolster their journey. This was a blessing for a number of churches and is still ongoing. An evaluation of the implementation has been and will continue to take place at each of the summits that have taken place and will continue to take place in the future. Reports from each church involved are given which show both the positive and negative aspects of the implementation (see APPENDIX K).

Summary

The planning has materialized and the Survey has begun to make its contribution to the functioning of the church in Australia. There is a blending together of the theological teaching emphasized in chapter two, combined with the literature highlighted in the review of chapter three. This now brings us to the final chapter that will reveal and demonstrate what has taken place at a practical level. There is a sense of exhilaration and excitement with what is happening.

CHAPTER 6

BRINGING IT TOGETHER

Introduction

The journey that has brought this project to this point has been very worthwhile. The theological study and the literature review contributed in a very important way to the development of the eighteen-question Survey. The data derived and the written responses given helped shine a light on much of what has been taking place in the Australian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists with regard to the question of diminishing numbers of the so-called millennials within the church.

One important issue was how the Survey did more than what was probably expected. We expected useful statistics as well as written comments. One positive response stated by quite a number was that the Survey was not just filed away, rather it was being given serious attention. Often the millennials could be heard saying, “At last they are listening to us.” What came into public view was a sense of malaise, with regard to the millennial loss, that had settled over the thinking of some within the church. Furthermore, one window of insight was that the youth and young adults had a deep sense of resonance with a church community that was grace-based rather than rules-oriented. The grace-based church orientation worked on the principles of love, acceptance, encouragement, and participation. On the other hand, a rules-based church was often perceived as being judgmental. Basically, this has almost always been the case between older and younger generations. However, that does not stop it from having some relevance. Still another point came into focus, and that was quite a few of the

millennial age group did not like any SDA church criticism of other Christian denominations. This was partly because many of their friends at work or at University were Christians too, even though not SDA.

The results of Growing Together, up until mid 2023, which is the implementation of the strategy, will also be highlighted in this chapter. An evaluation of this implementation will be shown as well.

Survey Responses and Insights

The Survey Research was conducted under the auspices of Andrews University Doctor Ministry program and met all of the IRB protocols for both academic and ethical standards (See APPENDIX C). By participating and submitting the Survey each participant affirmed their consent. When the Survey was completed, 424 responses had been received. Table 1 covers the age grouping of the participants.

Of the 424 responses, the pie chart below shows that there was a fairly even spread over the whole age spectrum. Fifty six per cent of the respondents were aged between 22 and 31, possibly the most critical age group in deciding whether to stay or whether to go as members of the SDA church. Figure 1 shows the proportional balance of the age groupings:

Table 1. Age Groups of the 424 participants

Age Groups	Responses
18-21	94
22-25	122
26-31	117
32-37	91
Total of All Four Age Groups	424

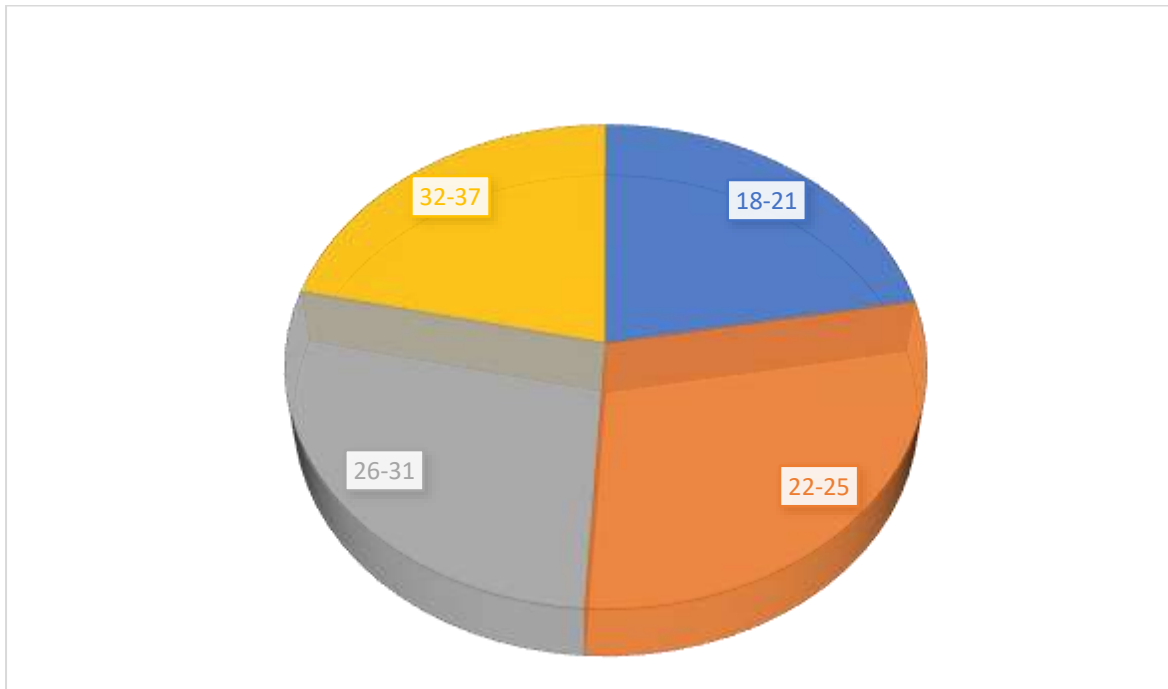


Figure 1: Participant Age Groups
Blue, Orange, Grey, and Yellow (age groups from 18 to 37 years)

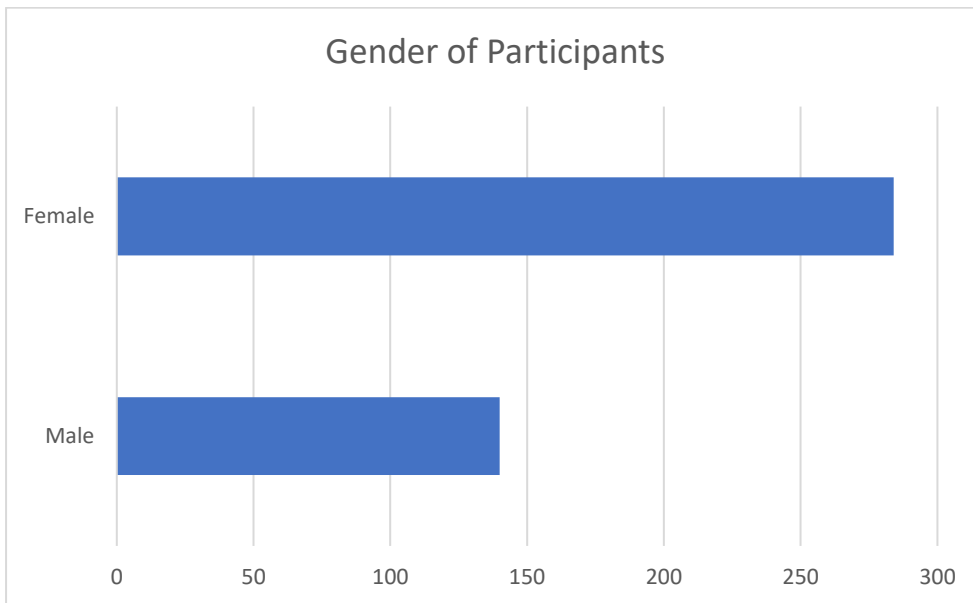


Figure 2: Gender of Participants (Question 2)
284 females and 140 males that completed the Survey

Two-thirds of those that responded were females as shown in Figure 2. At some future time it would be useful to look more closely at this, and to see if one could find a set of reasons for this uneven spread. Some questions that might be researched are: 1) Do females not leave the church as rapidly as the males; or 2) Alternatively did a high proportion of males choose not to respond; or maybe, it reflects a greater concern for religious and spiritual things within the females of humanity?

The Questions

When asked concerning “What best describes your ethnic background?” (Q3) 322 responded as Australian, 1 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 29 Polynesian, 5 Melanesian, while 67 responded as “other,” there was room to give an alternate answer. Some of these could be students from overseas or citizens of Australia, or both.

Of the 424 (Q4) that responded 253 were in full time employment, 124 as a mix of part time study and work, with 47 designating themselves as volunteers, generally understood as not working, but most likely younger full-time students.

Almost 98 per cent (415) designated Australia as their place of residence. (Q5). These were located (Q6) in a major city 200, a regional center 141, a rural area 73, and a remote area 10. Questions 1 – 6 (Q1-6) focused on basic identity issues. In another research project it would be useful to see what the ethnic origin and demographic location is of the full membership of the SDA church.

However, from question 7 and on, social relationships and other personal responses came into focus. “What is your relationship status?” (Q7) probed the issue of male/female and female/male. Single respondents totaled 259, married 147, and de facto 18. It was obvious that most of the respondents, 343 (Q8) had always attended the SDA church, with 81 answering “No”—these could opt to describe their journey. The Church attendance response

(Q9), to “do you attend church”? gave this spread that covered the pattern of attendance that ranged from weekly regular attendance to not at all (Appendix B, p. 100) (see Table 2).

Table 2. Attendance of 424 Survey Participants

Week	303
A few times a month	72
Monthly	9
A few times a year	14
Special occasions	4
Used to attend, but not anymore	22

There is quite a high level of engagement with some 70% saying that they attend weekly, and another 16% attending a couple of times a month.

There was almost an equal division between those that answered “has church always been a positive experience for you?” (Q10), “Yes” was 213 and “No” was 221. A much longer question was then raised (Q11), “Have your parents and/or other family members always been supportive and encouraging of your Christian experience?”: For “Yes” = 385 and “No” = 39. Question 12 recorded 402 responses to, “What ways would you suggest that young adults could be supported and encouraged in the church today?” This type of enquiry continued with question 13 that asked: “If you had the opportunity to make some changes that would make church more friendly for youth and young adults what would you change?” 382 provided answers. Going deeper into the question of wider support (Q14), 409 responded “Yes” to the question, “Apart from your family, have there been any other people that have been supportive and encouraging of your Christian experience?” Only 15 answered “No.” Four hundred and six [406] (Q15) provided comments to the question, “What aspects of church life did you most appreciate (please describe)?” To the question (Q16) 374 said

“Yes” and 50 said “No” to the enquiry, “Have you been, or are you currently involved in, church life?” The final two questions (Q17 and 18) asked “do you have any further comments?” to which 263 replied (Q17) and then a thank you for submitting the Survey (Q18, Appendix B, p. 103). There were 30,000 words of response to the various questions. We now turn to these responses.

Some early reflections would indicate that a large majority of those that responded to the Survey were regular attenders (See Table 2). Furthermore, a large percentage of them were female. With the 30,000 words of written material, it would indicate that there was a degree of involvement in the continuance of the church, even if there was a level of criticism.

Written Responses Giving Insight and Opinions

In seeking an answer to some of the issues faced by the millennial Seventh-day Adventist youth in Australia, their reactions and their experiences in the church were sought. Clearly there were a range of responses, but they separated into two major positions, those that have positive reactions and those that were quite negative.

Negative Response Narratives

“I don't think meeting with any group of people so diverse as a church will ever always be a positive experience. Most of my personal negative experiences stem from being excluded from participation based on differences in generational values” (Respondent 53). Age and generation differences have tended to create many issues for those that live and grow-up in a modern Western world democracy like Australia. Educational values including a switch to the digital world has in reality widened the gap. The feeling of exclusion of the younger members by some older members is disheartening. One stated, “I have felt ostracized at times” (Respondent 81). Yet another, “Sometimes I've felt left out, judged and restricted by too many rules and red tape” (Respondent 77). This response begins to highlight

a critical issue. This negativity is further exemplified in, “I grew up in a small town, in a small legalistic and judgmental church” (Respondent 124). A very cryptic response, “Pointless politics” (Respondent 91). And sadly, “It’s a horrible place if you don’t fit into the social expectations of the religion” (Respondent 51). The rules-based members tend to look at the youth and see them as somewhat problematic and not submissive to their set of rules, while the more accepting approach, on the other hand, gives space to the younger set and encourages them by friendship, acceptance combined with a genuine and meaningful encouragement. This leads us into the positive responses.

Positive Response Narratives

Obviously, there are different attitudes and responses in different church locations. Many very affirming and positive ones were submitted. “I’ve never had a negative experience in the 2 churches I’ve attended throughout my life. Praise God” (Respondent 127). Further, “I’ve grown up in church and always been involved” (Respondent 178). Without comment a few more representative responses are given (see Table 3).

Table 3. The Very Affirmative and Positive Responses

“I’m the only SDA in my biological family. At age 15 I was adopted by an SDA family. Thankfully they all understand and support me in my decision.” (Survey 62)
“Hang outs (eating lunch together, activities planned), everyone is friendly.” (Survey 84)
“I always feel welcomed.” (Survey 201)
“Church has always been good with friends that are really lovely and learning new things about God.” (Survey 282)
“My church is my family, always greet me with a warm smile and are invested in my journey, provide support and advice.” (Survey 292)
“Fortunate enough to always feel connected and church encouraged me to grow spiritually.” (Survey 292)
“Yes, I have always been blessed, encouraged, challenged and grown through my experience at church.” (Survey 384)

These responses show clearly that there are some good things happening in the churches. Clearly, within the SDA church in Australia, there are some churches that do rather well, equally, there are some that leave a lot to be desired. However, it is a two way street, the problems are not necessarily only one-sided, the youth too can at times be problematic.

“Things to Change” Analysis

In round figures about 400 responded to the question concerning desired changes. These suggestions for change were presented in 11,500 words, averaging just over 25 words per response. The question put was: “If you had the opportunity to make some changes that would make the church more friendly for youth and young adults, what would you change?”

Before proceeding with the analysis of these responses a number of issues need to be clarified. Not every response has been presented. However, there has been a conscious effort to not do what is called “cherry picking.” The quotations presented, were deemed to have captured the insights of many others, probably more succinctly and precisely. However, every response was read and the general intent has been included in the final nuanced answer. It was decided that for this present study, the current level of research was adequate. Of future research interest and value, two academic scholars are about to engage in some further analysis of the 30,000 words of response. It was decided that any piece of research must have delimiting boundaries, and it was recognized that this DMin research is in fact from a pastoral perspective rather than a sociological or psychological perspective. These two scholars will extend the usefulness of the collected material by examining the 30,000 words of material from the point of view of sociological as well as psychological criteria. In a real sense it is outside the scope of this DMin project.

In the current research multiple issues will arise in all of the categories. In discussing each issue analysis will follow a number of representative quotations that will be

acknowledged by an inserted bracketed Survey number ranging from 1-424. They will appear like this: Each response will be in quotation marks with the Survey submission number as follows (e..g. Survey 321). Readers need to be aware that the identity of each bona fide respondent remains anonymous.

Acceptance

These are telling comments that reveal a deep sense of hurt and alienation (in this case the millennials), but it basically happens when each generation begins to move into the realm of adulthood. Most persons, and especially the younger set, want to be accepted because of who they are, not because they tick certain boxes in someone's critical assessment. What undergirds most of these responses is that some older persons within the church reject modern-youth-ways of doing things. This is particularly evident when the younger person(s) does things that do not conform with a traditional way of thinking, particularly when it touches religion and worship. When something is held as important by an older person, but when asked by a younger person, "Why?" there needs to be a better answer than, "That's how we have always done it." Most problems tend to arise when all things are held as equally important. The big issue comes when there is no distinction between what is central and what is peripheral. Probably, one of the issues is that the older person has worked out what they see as central, and the younger is still testing the waters (see Table 4).

See table next page

Table 4. The Importance of the Attitude of Acceptance

“more acceptance and open-mindedness, Christianity is a personal walk and journey” (Survey 19)
“let the youth be heard, give them a chance to speak up” (Survey 23)
“more encouragement.” (Survey 38)
“get ‘old’ people to stop judging and criticizing” (Survey 414)
“older members not making rude or judgmental comments” (Survey 417)

The Church Itself

Many older SDAs use the King James Version (KJV). Along with this they have developed an approach that reads literally in a proof-texting way that seeks for present-truth. On the other hand, almost all younger Australian SDAs make use of more modern English translations. Combined with this is the modern educational way of asking questions and seeking for insight. Many of the older persons came through what was educationally a much more authoritarian, scripted and at times rote understanding approach. Furthermore, there is the question of thought and practice—each generation has different thought patterns, and certainly alternate practice scenarios. Modern biblical translations use paragraphing approaches, while the KJV tends to separate each verse one from the other. Hence, the reader of the KJV more often isolates a text from its context and tends to use a proof-texting methodology.

It is well known that SDAs hold doctrinally to three levels of theological practice: first, those teachings held in common with all Christian churches; secondly, those teachings held in common with some Christian churches; and thirdly, those teachings which are unique to SDAs. For many youth and young adults their thought-world is cross-fertilized by interacting with Christians from other denominations. Hence, questioning takes place. These questions

are mostly seeking for insight, whereas quite frequently older members see them as heading down the path to apostasy. Rather than listening and discussing, some resort to attack with the deeply held sense that they are only upholding the truth.

In Christian growth and discussion there is a wide pattern of pathways to understanding. The first of these is the pathway of truth as found in the Bible. One has faith and trust in the inspired word of God, and one follows those revealed truths. However, each person has the power of reason, and for modern youth, educationally what is called the rational quality comes to the fore. One has been given a brain, and one needs to use it. This opens the door to adverbial type questions such as: How? What? When? Why? Again, they are often seen by older members as being rebellious, when only applying the tools they have been taught.

Tradition is certainly a very useful thing, but if it becomes a straitjacket it is problematic. In fact, one could argue that we could not exist as humans if we did not have some traditions. Yet, traditions need to be examined, and their sub-structures, like the foundation of a building need to be secure.

Even beyond the faith and the rational approach is the so-called experiential. The experiences of life for the young are so different from those that grew up in the 1930s through to the 1990s. What has actually happened in the last 80 plus years is a phenomenal exponential growth and change. One example is the rapidly changing world of IT computers and phones. This is rather unsettling to many older persons, while the realm of being open to constant change is the world of the modern youth. If there were no traditions there would ultimately be no functional social groups. Maybe part of the answer is to get both groups (the old and the young) to become more acquainted with each other, and to seek to understand each other a little more. This in turn even touches on the issue of intergenerational mentoring.

In reality, no wonder there are so many differences (see Table 5).

Table 5. The Character and Quality of the Church itself

“the mindset of the church” (Survey 5)
“have less of a legalistic and political church” (Survey 35)
“embrace culture of today, less judgmental” (Survey 117)
“attitudes and self-righteous nature of the church” (Survey 148)
“structure of church programs” (Survey 420)
“more emphasis on come as you are” (Survey 334)
“realistically it’s the attitude of both young and old people that needs to be changed” (Survey 92)

Service

Table 6 is put first here with an effort to visually emphasize the importance of being an active member, rather than just being a passive observer:

Table 6. The Need for Participation in Active Service

“more opportunities to engage and serve” (Survey 81)
“give them more opportunities to serve in the church” (Survey 88)
“empower them in leadership and involvement” (Survey 247)

Even the question of service has changed some of its parameters as the 21st century is almost a quarter of the way completed. In the past it was often like an apprenticeship type of approach where the young learner followed a set of principles that might be designated as: Observe; Imitate; Listen; Participate; and then maybe Ask Questions. The modern western world influences in Australia have frequently developed a much more active participatory role. Passivity in observation and listening is not now as dominant as it used to be. This prior

type of function still tends to operate in some SDA churches, where one learns to serve by watching and observing how the ensconced leaders do their thing. What is often forgotten, these established leaders learned by trial and error, and did not do it right the first time. What the youth need is the ability to do things, to make genuine mistakes and to move forward. What they don't need is an ongoing critical set of comments about how they are performing. It is at this juncture that a genuine mentor is very helpful. Such mentors do not work on the interference principle, neither do they work on the jug to cup type of insight, rather they are there as a sounding board when needed. They do not work prescriptively, that is telling what should be done, rather they function descriptively, narrating what is going on in a very constructive way. See Table 6 above to focus again on a sense of more modern activity and interaction.

Hot Drinks, Biscuits and Saturday Luncheon

There were many references to more social interface on Sabbath, as well as during the week, but there were often problems for small groups of youth in small churches.

Youth require good social times as well as spiritual occasions that are fresh, engaging and affirming. Single youth, in particular, quite often feel lonely and unnoticed. Each has wants and needs that range across the physical, social, mental, and spiritual aspects of being a human. Church should be a positive influence for each person as they face the challenges of becoming independent, of learning to be ethically and morally balanced, well-rounded and good citizens within their communities. Youth need to feel that they have some sense of belonging when times get tough and on occasion rough. Youth and young adults at all times, but more so in this modern world, find it difficult to process issues of maturation, the physical, mental, and social changes that take place in their lives and in the world. Maybe, it is a truth that if one has the benefits of a hot drink, a nice lunch and happy time, they are then more open to the deeper issues of spirituality and the growth of a strong community. Being

noticed, being accepted, being understood, being well fed are issues that open many doors and many hearts (see Table 7).

Table 7. Social aspects are Very Important in Worship

“include café / food spaces for hang out” (Survey 75)
“having a pot-luck every week at church” (Survey 225)
“need a feed, support or encouragement” (Survey 232)
“hot drinks cart in church foyer Including coffee” (Survey 272)
“more time to socialize” (Survey 163)

Music

Music has tended to be a hot topic of discussion. The arguments are not only over the choice of music, but over the decibels, the loudness. Many of the youth find the old hymns out of date both musically and word-wise, a past era for them. On the SDA church campgrounds this debate often becomes quite volatile. Educationally, one has to begin where the student is, not at some ideal place or position. That would mean, to a certain degree, one needs to have music that not only entices but also enhances the message of salvation. Tolerance, patience, understanding and above all genuine kindness is what is needed (see Table 8).

Table 8. Music is a Significant Aspect of Life and Worship

“I would adapt the worship service to include a wider range or song choices instead of just the ‘3 hymn sandwich’” (Survey 27)
“the dictatorship to have only old-school music in every single tent” (Survey 138)
“modern music mixed in” (Survey 272)
“a good mix of newer and older songs” (Survey 282)

Quality Religious Information and Learning

Youth and young adults wish to be genuine insiders by right of being young, and not because someone has acted in a patronizing way toward them. Even nominating committees often choose not to give any role position prior to baptism. Every system needs its rules, but the rules are never there to ride roughshod over anyone. This narrative raises questions and seeks for constructive answers. A large truth is found in the statement, “If it is warm at home, one stays, but if it is cold one goes!” The youth of today, will be the older church of tomorrow, but they have to remain there to complete that sequence. What the youth and young adults want is to be accepted. While it may sound tired and worn it is nevertheless profoundly true: “What you do speaks so loud, I can’t hear what you say” (see Table 9).

See Table 9, next page

Table 9. Religion that Satisfies Needs Quality Learning Processes

“praised for participation instead of criticized” (Survey 6)
“getting them involved and allow them to share their struggles and achievement”
(Survey 4)
“change the model to having a small sermon, followed by discussion groups”
(Survey 8)
“try to be genuinely open to differing opinions” (Survey 28)
“seems like people want youth to be here but don’t want us to be actually involved”
(Survey 40)
“stop doing token deed to make them feel welcome.” (Survey 51)

I Love my Church and Some Churches are Already Doing it Well

What these responses show is that some SDA churches have really made a special effort to not only understand the youth and young adults, but also to accept them on equal terms, as persons that are individuals that think and act for themselves in their own right. If, and when someone takes a higher ground position and attitude, they often fall into the trap that is designated by the saying, “When I point my finger at someone else, I forget that three are still pointing back!” In other terms all of us are human, and even the best exponents, no matter how well trained, will slip and make mistakes. In reality one of the great strengths of Christianity is that it asks of each that they take a humble attitude to life and existence (see Table 10).

See Table 10, next page

Table 10. I Love my Church and the Care they Provide

“my church is very friendly” (Survey 3)
“my church is already very friendly towards youth” (Survey 173)
“I’ve been blessed to have been raised in a church that is very accommodating to youth and I wouldn’t change anything” (Survey 179)
“our youth group is very friendly” (Survey 210)
“in my experience my local church is doing this quite well” (Survey 363)

Mid-week Activities and Activities of a Social Nature

Youth tend to have boundless energy, particularly when they are doing something that they like and cherish. It is most important that they meet their peers and have ongoing interface. Frequently, it is through the so-called non-religious aspects of the church that space is created that will lead to movement in the spiritual realms of life. Boy needs to meet girl and girl needs to meet boy in locations that are conducive to the development of worthwhile, healthy, and wholesome relationships. Having homes open to go for an evening meal, to sit and watch TV, to talk and plan are the context of future growth into being an adult Christian. Just having a place where youth can drop in, would be a wonderful step in enhancing their growth as persons and as Christians. It could be that a number of homes could be open, a different one on a different day. What a potential for ministry done at what some might call a secular level, but one however that reveals an unspoken Christianity (see Table 11).

See Table 11, next page

Table 11. There is more to Church than just Week-end Services

“I would hold youth nights in people’s homes” (Survey 56)
“A warm space where people can meet and hang out outside of church hours” (Survey 62)
“add more social events” (Survey 116)
“more small groups groups doing all sorts of mixed interest things” (Survey 124)
“more youth events on Friday/Saturday nights” (Survey 133)
“inter-church basketball tournament” (Survey 137)
“midweek activities” (Survey 255)

Issues that were Presented by an Individual or a Small
Number of Responders

There will always be new and different things that will surface. These need to be addressed in ways that are gentle and kind, and where possible constructive solutions implemented. This then presents an overview of what the youth would like to see changed. Even when the church decides that “we cannot go there” it should always be done with respect, courtesy, kindness, authenticity and genuine concern (see Table 12).

See Table 12, next page

Table 12. A Number of Issues that Require some Attention

“where is God in the LGBTQI community” (Survey 31)
“a group for married couples without kids” (Survey 66)
“offering more contemporary worships and a variety of styles” (Survey 70)
“more authentic and relevant” (Survey 86)
“embrace culture of today” (Survey 117)
“more youth in leadership roles” (Survey 276)
“we don’t have an SDA counselling service” (Survey 308)
“cater and nurture a good bible study and discussion session” (Survey 421)

Youth and the Issue of Worthwhile Mentoring

Youth and young adults benefit greatly from having a mentor that is authentic, genuine and worthwhile. Mentors do not make decisions for the mentee. Neither do they become authoritarian. They approach the task as a privilege that has implicit responsibilities such as trust, truthfulness, kindness, integrity and ultimately a decent humanity. These mentors seek to facilitate the growth of the person physically, socially, mentally and spiritually. One of the mentor’s goals is to enable the mentee to gain and retain a worthwhile set of human and personal values. This gaining of experience and perspective on/in life has a value that is specifically concerned with the maturation of the young person and their growth toward maturity.

In the Survey, the postings to this question resulted in 5000 words being submitted. Several things were noticeable. Firstly, any mentor that did the task because of a sense of obligation came across as contrived and artificial. On the other-hand those that functioned as genuine mentors did their work in a spontaneous way that grew out of genuine care and concern for others, with a deep sense of love and justice. There is in humans the ability to detect sincerity and empathy that manifests as a genuine love of/for people. Secondly, a

mentor is not there at a nuisance level, but is rather there when love and justice are needed. A warm smile, a good handshake, a meaningful hug, a listening ear, a wise response, a helpful hand, a good sounding board are the components that make it work.

When the full text of what was written about mentors in the Survey was read and understood there was no special category of person that could fit into the space that could be designated as an effective mentor. Education, financial well-being, academic status, gender, intelligence, and social skills, while important issues, were not what gave credence to being a good mentor. Being authentic, genuine, caring, supportive, not interfering and not being judgmental, were the real building blocks of a worthwhile mentor. We will examine some of the comments that give deeper insight into the world of a good mentor.

Will I Take Time to Stop and Observe?

If those that administer the church systems have a deep sense of care, then the pathway is more open to enabling good and meaningful mentorship roles. In many ways there is a top-down syndrome. When the administrators and leaders create a real sense of ambience and thoughtfulness, even troubled youth are prepared to stop, look, and maybe even listen (see Table 13).

Table 13. Am I Really Observed and Cared for?

“Extremely supportive pastor” (Survey 8)
“Some church leaders have really taken an interest in my development” (Survey 10)
“Youth pastor at my local church” (Survey 13)
“Teachers, Pathfinder leaders, Summer Camps staff, lecturers and friends” (Survey 81)
“Chaplains, pastors, youth leaders, teachers” (Survey 159)

Peer Relationships and Those Slightly Older

After all we are social creatures, we are not individual islands. Social relationships are the thing that life is made up of. If only we knew how often has a kind word, a warm smile made the difference in one's life. In life, divergent pathways look close to each other at the beginning of the road, but further along they are often widely apart. To keep on a pathway there needs to be a good sense of enticement and a good package of encouragement. It is at these critical divergences that the role of the mentor can become decisive (see Table 14).

Table 14. Community: a Set of Values and Kindness

"In my teen years I had young adults that kept in touch with me"
(Survey 15)

"I have an amazing group of mentors in my life. If it were not for these people I would have left a long time ago" (Survey 362)

"church family" (Survey 38)

Sometimes it Doesn't Hurt us to be Jolted a Little

"I grew up in a single parent family. I think my mum saw my older brothers leave the church because they had no strong mentor (despite her best efforts). So, she made sure I was plugged in with supportive mentors from the youth group I attended, to pastors and other leaders. I am so grateful I had all these people, but I also wonder where these people were for my brothers, I don't understand why the church didn't reach out to them." (Respondent 179)

Life is not always joyful and happy, but this posting is full of a deep sense of sadness and why? why? why? Here there are a few what ifs that come to mind. Part of being a good mentor is having the integrity to say I was wrong, I could have done more, I am in fact sorry.

And There is More – This Gives a Warm Glow

“Since becoming a single mother (out of wedlock) the church has been more supportive than I could have ever imagined! It came as a real surprise to me as I know I did the wrong thing so assumed there would be tension within the church. As far as I can see and tell everyone at my home church has embraced me further into the ... family and have done all they can to support me. People who never spoke to me before now take the time to check in on me. This has really showed me the value of a solid church family.” (Respondent 277)

It is a well-known truth that people don’t need to be told when they have made a mistake that has lasting consequences. What they need is understanding, not condemnation. Reading the above quote gives one a warm feeling of saying “that was lovely” – what a difference genuine kindness and understanding makes.

Personnel Cost Money, But it is Worth it

Institutions do cost money, but ultimately what is a person worth? Money is not the only thing that makes institutions what they are, it is the people that work there. It is very clear from reading the responses that good SDA institutional input has been one of the wonderful contributions to church maintenance and stability (see Table 15).

Table 15. It may Cost Money, but each Person is Worthwhile

“Teachers, family friends (extended family), lecturers at Avondale” (Survey 22)

“Youth directors” (Survey 188)

“I went to a very Christian school and all the teachers were extremely supportive and very generous and kind people who wanted to help grow my faith” (Survey 173)

“School friends, teachers, peers, older youth, friendly older members of the church who know your name” (Survey 127)

“Bible teacher and church friends” (Survey 72)

“School staff (SDA school)” (Survey 265)

Established Older Members

Older persons that have retained a sense of “I was there once” can have a lasting and wonderful influence in facilitating younger persons to find their feet and grow, and hopefully in years to come remembering how they too were helped (see Table 16).

Table 16. Never too Old to Care and Facilitate

“Several older people in the church have taken an interest in mentoring the youth” “Church 'Mums' who pray for and encourage me” (Survey 131)

“Elderly ‘adopted grandparents’” (Survey 155)

“An elder who prayed over me. Another mum minding my daughter during the sermon so I can listen” (Survey 238)

Mums and Dads

One should never forget the mums and dads who have supported their children through the stage of growing to maturity. While most think of mentors outside of their family, many dads and mums that have an open approach can act as very powerful mentors.

Mentors that function in our churches are to be given accolades for their care and concern. Many youth look back to these persons as the reason for their present continuance and input into the SDA church. They say a big thank you. (See APPENDIX J for employed youth and young adults.)

This brings the research to a place where there needs to be some serious reflection on what has taken place, but even more importantly what recommendations need to be focused now that the current research has reached a point of conclusion. After all, each piece of academic work needs to have a point of completion. All such work has to deal with concepts

of scope, breadth, length and results. There has been a recital of many of those results in chapters 5 and 6, now is the time for any criticism, any limitations and any recommendations that will enable what has begun with this current research, but still needs to reach into the future.

“Growing Together,” or the implementation of the strategy, has played a key role in changing the church culture of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia. This change has moved those churches toward being places where youth and young adults will want to engage in church life and has slowed the exodus of millennials from the church. We expect it will continue to do so. The three significant areas of focus for this implementation, stronger mentor/mentee relationships, greater intergenerational connections, and much stronger family networks have made inroads within the churches involved in Growing Together. While changes made within the participating churches can be seen, the real test will be five to seven years into the future, which is outside of the scope of this study.

Simon Gigliotti (2023), who is youth director for one of our largest Australian conferences and summit coordinator, evaluates the Growing Together experience in this way:

The Growing Together journey was hugely successful for many of the churches that undertook the cohort. It helped a diverse group of Churches create better long-term vision and set out strategies to enable them reach their goals, within their context. Some churches saw an explosion of families and children in attendance as they implemented the principles and others saw clear growth in their local church youth ministry. While some churches with small youth groups did not experience the same swell of growth on the local level, there is no doubt that their intergenerational ministry was strengthened significantly as church members listened to each-other and began to experiment on the margins. In time, as they have persisted to implement the principles, some of these churches have begun to see growth in the areas of intergenerational ministry, and ministry to young people. (personal email)

There are many success stories around Australia from what has happened with the Growing Together implementation (see Appendix K).

The larger “Growing Together” journey can be seen in the following appendices: Appendix D, Appendix E, Appendix F, Appendix H,

Conclusions

What conclusions have we come to after all of this research and writing? It was quite rewarding to discover that what we read about in the literature was in fact verified by our Survey. Oddly when one reads about a scholar's research it often does not have the same forceful impact as one's own personal discovery. It became very clear that there were three major components in the task of keeping millennial youth in the church. These three came in the closely contested order of (1) mentoring, followed by (2) intergenerational participation, and (3) the extension of the intergenerational to include parents that exemplified what Christian living really was. In a very clear way, it showed that cognitive information had nowhere near the impact of positive personal relationships. Thus, it confirmed that action, according to the old adage, did speak louder than mere words.

There is still the need for youth only events, but these special events should not prevent meaningful intergenerational cooperation. One quality of importance that came to the fore was the way families functioned in the development and maintenance of religious and spiritual attitudes.

When the recommendations that will immediately follow are presented, it will be evident that the first two recommendations encompass our three points of mentoring, intergenerational activity, and parental Christian living. Then will follow recommendations that deal with how to facilitate SDA millennial youth in University situations (Recommendation 3); the development of youth oriented question times (Recommendation 4); practical education sessions (Recommendation 5); the maintaining of professional standards for AUC and Local Conference staff (Recommendation 6); personal growth seminars (Recommendation 7); doing the Survey again in three years time (Recommendation 8); and further academic research on the 30,000 words of the Survey (Recommendation 9). A

final recommendation for the roll out of the “Growing Together” strategy within all conferences and churches.

Then came a range of other conclusions. The church became aware that they had been slow in recognizing the seriousness of the problem of this millennial loss of so many youth, and then seeking to do something serious about it. The Survey was conceived as an academic piece to give credence and credibility to the research. However, it turned out to be much more than that. It was seen as a major turning point in the relationship between the youth, young people, and the church administration. What is more, the reaction to the Survey, and a continuing and ongoing reaction, is a sense of genuine surprise that its insights are in fact being implemented.

Yet another important insight was that many of the youth still liked the church. What a large proportion liked was when the church operated in a way that placed emphasis on the qualities of grace and not so much on insights that were perceived as being rules-based. In many ways it became clear that church was much more than doctrine, church was in fact a way of living a worthwhile life, of fostering firm and authentic personal relationships and having a living connection with Jesus. In reality the whole process has highlighted that if something is worthwhile it needs a sense of direction, a sense of commitment, and a sense of a meaningful future. Growing out of this sense of commitment, it also became very clear that the pathways between church and youth, as well as between youth and church, need to be maintained and fostered. This is an amazing agenda for both now and the future. What is more, to be a whole person encompasses the wide scope of intellectual, social, spiritual, and physical development. It is the facilitation of independent, ethical, moral, and a well-balanced youth as the desired outcome.

Recommendations

To begin there needs to be some reflection on the process that has brought us to this point. Possibly, there is another piece of research for the future. For example, we could have had various age groupings of members from different SDA church communities talking to each other in an open forum setting. Again, we probably needed to have at least a couple of questions that dealt with any differences of response between female respondents and male respondents. The current Survey had twice as many females respond, compared to males.

What recommendations will be carried forward? What should be done to keep the momentum going? How will it be possible to know if we are remaining on the right track? What funding and what policies can we keep tuned to the needs of the church including the needs of the millennials? One very important question is how can we keep abreast of the situation without giving the impression that we are just a data collecting agency of the church? Without diminishing the needs of the youth and the young adults, it may be useful to research what those over 40 think about how the church meets their needs. This then brings us to some serious recommendations. These will be investigated in the next section of this chapter.

Recommendation 1

One very important skill is that of being a mentor for youth. It will begin small but could grow right across the community of the SDA church. To start, one conference level youth department person should be trained in teaching and promoting the skills of being an effective mentor. This person could then run a combination of online and face to face training services. It can work on two principles, addition and multiplication. To begin there will be the addition of ones and twos, but as the group grows it can begin to multiply. Probably it would be necessary to give to those that have successfully completed the course a certificate saying that they had participated in a guided pathway of instruction. Ultimately, it is not to

train professionals, it is rather to change church culture, but it must begin with appropriately trained persons. This training, under conference control, can begin with a weekend training seminar that leads into some Zoom meetings and class work over a period of several months. It should be an AUC directed task, using the skills of conference youth directors. One trained conference youth director in the AUC then trains other conference youth directors and thus enables the effective development down to the local church level.

Recommendation 2

There needs to be some thought given to the combining of intergenerational functioning and the processes of mentoring. It will not happen immediately, but as trust develops, many worthwhile things can transpire. Often secular things can build bridges. It could be that the older ones in the church decide to provide a quality banquet for the youth (all the food and the waiting done by the older members), and then possibly three months later the youth could invite the older ones to a pizza, fish and chips night. Here the youth might tell something about their hobbies, their exploits and their hopes. As bridges are built there will be discoveries on both sides, young and old.

Recommendation 3

It is recommended that the SDA church establish student friendly clubs on University campuses that enable and facilitate SDA students with the process of living in a modern University setting. Funding for this should be provided at the Union Conference level. These forums need to be Australia wide and known as Adventist University Youth Forums. These should be under the direction and guidance of the Australian Union Conference, but with a large component of youth input. Members of the club should be currently active/enrolled students.

Recommendation 4

It would be useful to have in the local churches youth-oriented open question times. Also, there should be open times when all the church can participate. It needs to be advertised ahead of time. It would work well at a regional youth day, and even in the Youth tent at camp meetings. There needs to be a set of guidelines established. All questions should come via a moderator, and no question should be out of bounds, provided it does not cross the boundaries of general decency. Judgmental responses are not appropriate from the panel members. Time and place will determine how it is formatted. One most important feature should be adequate time to consider how to implement what has been decided.

Recommendation 5

There should be educational sessions acted out in a dramatic way. These could be done by an SDA drama group. They could illustrate how and how not to do things. One could act out different ways of being a Christian in the world. Such things as the bible basher, the theological answer to a simple question (“I won’t ask him again!”), the kind helper, the pompous know it all, the humble thoughtful person, the one that goes the second and third mile to give undeserved help, and so on. This could be part of a youth meeting presentation organised by the Union, and could have humorous clips from films and videos, as well as three or four good actors/actresses presenting.

Recommendation 6

This suggestion arose out of post-Survey discussion. It is important. It was a reaction that came from thinking of how all participants, including leaders need to keep actively up to date. The suggestion is that there be specialised training for all youth directors and assistant directors provided annually. This could take the form of maintaining professional standards. It should consist of at least the following: a) two online presentations per year, by an expert

in the field, dealing with any question deemed important (suggestions from youth directors/leaders as to what the question should be, whether sociological, psychological, legal, even hypothetical; and b) a Zoom meeting presentation by one or more SDA millennials that takes a sense of forum in open discussion with the youth leaders. This is to be AUC generated.

Recommendation 7

Develop personal growth seminars for the millennials. Many youth do not know how to navigate their sexuality, dating in a way that combines romance and responsibility, living with an IT world and social media, developing skills for living, and what does one do when they have made some unhappy mistakes? Even how to negotiate one's way through the social media, the scams of the internet and fake news is necessary in our modern world. These should be at the level of personal story combined with useful information. Basically, these would work best at the local church level.

Recommendation 8

This current Survey is excellent but there is need for continuing research to keep the programs, attitudes and suggestions in the foreground. Therefore, it is recommended that every three years a new Survey should take place, under the AUC Youth Ministries Department direction.

Recommendation 9

The data collected in the Survey is valuable, but as a DMin task, the reading of the Survey tended to focus more on pastoral issues. However, in the 30,000 words there is still a wealth of material that needs Sociological, Psychological and even Anthropological analysis. It is recommended that chosen qualified scholars be employed to do so. It should be under the guidance of the AUC youth director.

Recommendation 10

With “Growing Together” having had a positive impact on the Seventh-day Adventist church in Australia to date, it is therefore recommended that “Growing Together” be implemented throughout all churches in the Australian Union Conference.

Summary

This is now coming to the end of the research and the reporting. It has been a learning experience that has challenged, has informed, and has facilitated the author. There are many things that have been learned and have been accepted as invaluable. Probably, the first thing that impacted the writer was that youth and young adults did not like someone telling them what to think and say, rather they often wanted to express in their words where they were at. Youth and young adults, contrary to the expressed view of some older traditional worshippers, were not bad because they asked questions that at times appeared to challenge the status quo. Rather they had grown up in an educational system that taught them to be critically aware. To fob them off with a “that’s how we have always done it,” was not good enough, they wanted real answers. Another issue of prime importance was that the youth and young adults wanted to be more than pew warmers – they wished to be active and not passive participants. Yet, another was that church and worship should not just think about the spiritual side of life, it should include a wholistic approach that covered youth and young adults as seeking for social activity as well as professional, education and work oriented issues. Many of the deeper issues moved down the pathway of what it means to be a human being in a world that was often both confusing and contradictory.

Of course, there were limitations to the project. Much more could have been pursued but there is/was only so much space and time to fit it together. All studies have to work on

what is called delimiting – doing what is necessary to come to a reasonable outcome. That being said, many of the youth and young adults, many of the SDA conference youth workers, many of the Conference Presidents and Financial Officers agreed that the whole process had been very useful and helpful.

This brings the project to a close. It has been a challenging journey and it has been a very worthwhile and instructive pathway. It has taken seriously the need to work with youth and young adults, and it has already begun to show positive outcomes. Outcomes will only be lasting and functional when they deal with persons in a way that is deeply human, and not because we have discovered a number of important pathways. Information is needed, but youth and young adults need more than that, they need understanding, love, care and concern. Ultimately justice and care are the foundations of a successful youth department in the Australian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (See APPENDIX J).

APPENDIX A

(from hellalife.com)

[Downloaded and left with original formatting]

DEFINING THE GENERATIONS

Among generations, boomers are easy to identify, and millennials have made their mark. But who is a Xennial and where did Gen Alpha come from? And Generation Jones? The contemporary naming of generations dates back to poet [Gertrude Stein](#), who wrote of those who came of age during World War I, “You are all a lost generation.” Nearly a century later, names, labels and character studies for the generations have multiplied.

By the numbers

Baby Boomers: born 1946 to 1964

The baby boomer generation — the [only generation officially recognized by the U.S. Census Bureau](#) — began immediately after World War II (with people born in 1946) and wrapped up in 1964. These days, boomers are in their late 50s to early 70s, many about to be or already retired.

Generation Jones: born 1955 to 1965

Younger boomers — titled [Generation Jones](#) to reflect “keeping up with the Joneses” culture, the slang term “jones” for desire, the confusion of Bob Dylan’s Mr. Jones, and just the generic anonymity of the Jones name — were born between 1955 and 1965.

Generation X: born 1965 to 1980

With a decline in birth rates in 1965 came Generation X, which demographers generally say lasted until 1980. Gen X is also called the “baby bust” because of its smaller post-boom numbers.

Xennials: born 1977 to 1983

Squeezed in next was a “[micro-generation](#)” of Xennials born in the late ’70s and early ’80s. Also known as the “Oregon Trail generation,” Xennials had an analog childhood and a digital adulthood.

Millennials: born 1981 to 1996

According to Pew Research Center, Millennials were born between 1981 and 1996. The older segment of the demographic are well into adulthood. Millennials are also called Generation Y for following Generation X, and as the children of boomers, they’re sometimes called “echo boomers.”

Generation Z: born 1997 or after

Then came Gen Z, or iGen, which roughly starts with people born in 1997.

Generation Alpha: born 2010 or after

What comes after Gen Z? Some researchers are using the name [Generation Alpha](#) for kids born since 2010. We’ll see if that catches on in the coming years.

Many observers debate the precise dates and definitions or decry stereotypes attached to each generation. Nevertheless, their shared values and experiences shape education techniques, marketing strategies, purchasing decisions, work styles, voting preferences, social service needs, entertainment choices, musical tastes, and more.

Technology by the numbers

One of the biggest experiences shared by a generation is the technology it grew up with.

Boomers passed through childhood as television took hold, **Generation X** saw computers come onto the scene and millennials were born into the age of the Internet.

More recently, members of **iGen** or [Generation Z](#) are the first to grow up with smartphones, said Dr. Jean Twenge in her book *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy — and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood — and What That Means for the Rest of Us*.

Absorbed with [social media and texting](#), they are said to spend less time with their friends in person, which could be making them anxious or lonely, experts like Twenge say.

What defines a generation

Older **Baby Boomers** observed the Korean and Vietnam wars, and older members of that generation also participated in the latter.

[Generation Jones](#) had Watergate, the 1979 oil embargo, and AIDS, fostering what many see as a loss of trust in government and other institutions.

Those in **Generation X** are “the last Americans that know how to fold a newspaper, take a joke, and listen to a dirty story without losing their minds,” *Vanity Fair* magazine once wrote.

But [Gen Xers](#) also are described as the first “latchkey” kids, exposed to daycare and divorce that made them cautious and pragmatic.

During a short grace period, **Xennials** went to school before Columbine and found jobs before the recession.

[Millennials](#) learned about popular culture via cable television, joined the workforce at the height of the recession and delayed leaving home and marriage, giving them a “slow-start” reputation. They were old enough to understand the Sept. 11 attacks, helped elect the nation’s first black president and are the second-largest generation of voters after baby boomers

Generation Z will have more money than any previous generation — but more school debt as well. Donald Trump may be the first U.S. president they know.

But does it really matter?

Not everyone buys into the concept of generations, by the way.

A [Slate magazine](#) piece argued there was no scientific evidence to support the distinct characteristics of generations and that the concepts were arbitrary, flawed and stereotyped.

“Generations and generational differences are intriguing and inherently appealing concepts. As such, the media will keep on reporting on them, academics will publish, pundits will talk, and consultants will sell to whoever is buying,” it said.

“But the science says that, despite their popularity, generations simply aren’t a thing.”
Helen Wolfe • July 22, 2020

APPENDIX B

THE SURVEY DOCUMENT

SURVEY

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled “*Developing a new ministry model for engaging millennials in church life in the Australian Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.*” This study is being done by **Pastor Jeff Parker, Director of Youth Ministries for the Australian Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, who is a student** at Andrews University of Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA.

The purpose of this research study is **to discover whether strong family ties, intergenerational connections, and strong personal relationships have impacted the lives of millennials (people born from 1981 to 1996). This survey** will take you approximately **10 to 15** minutes to complete. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. You are free to omit any question.

There are no known risks associated with this research study. However, as with any online related activity the risk of a breach is always possible. Your answers to this study will remain confidential. Any potential risks will be minimized by **storing the data on a secure hard drive at 289 Maroondah Highway, Ringwood, Victoria.** By submitting the completed survey participants have given their consent.

1. Age range (years)
 - a. 18-21
 - b. 22-25
 - c. 26-31
 - d. 32-37

2. Male Female

3. What best describes your ethnic background?
 - a. Australian
 - b. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
 - c. Polynesian
 - d. Melanesian
 - e. Other, (please describe)

4. What best describes you?
 - a. Employed

- b. Part-time mix of study and work
- c. Other (e.g. voluntary work etc.), *(Please describe)*

5. Do you live in Australia?

- a. YES
 - b. NO
- If NO, *(please describe)*

6. Do you currently live in:

- a. A major city
- b. A regional centre
- c. A rural area
- d. A remote area

7. What is your relationship status?

- a. Single
- b. Married
- c. De-facto

8. Have you always attended an SDA church?

- a. YES
 - b. NO
- If NO, *(please describe)*

9. Do you attend church

- a. Weekly
- b. Monthly
- c. Special occasions
- d. Used to attend but not anymore, *(Please describe)*

10. Has church always been a positive experience for you?

- a. YES
- b. NO

If YES, *(please describe)*

If NO, *(please describe)*

11. Have your parents and/or other family members always been supportive and encouraging of your Christian experience?

- a. YES
- b. NO

If NO, *(please describe)*

12. What ways would you suggest that young adults could be supported and encouraged in the church today?

13. If you had the opportunity to make some changes that would make church more friendly for youth and young adults what would you change?

14. Apart from your family, have there been other people that have been supportive and encouraging of your Christian experience?

a. YES

b. NO

If YES, *(please describe)*

If NO, *(please describe)*

15. What aspects of church life do you most appreciate? *(Please describe)*.

16. Have you been, or are you currently involved in, church life?

a. YES

b. NO

If YES, what roles do you currently have or have had in the past, *(please describe)*

If NO, would you consider having an active role in church life, *(please describe)*

17. Do you have any further comments?

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey. By submitting your responses you have consented to participate and your contribution is very much appreciated.

Researcher: Pastor Jeffrey Parker, Director of Youth Ministries, Australian Union
Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

For more information
Email, jeffparker@adventist.org.au
Phone, 0407 261 886

APPENDIX C

THE IRB APPROVAL DOCUMENT

FYI

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: IRB <irb@andrews.edu>
Date: 13 November 2018 at 5:19:44 am AEDT
To: David Penno <penno@andrews.edu>
Cc: "JeffParker@adventist.org.au" <JeffParker@adventist.org.au>, "Barry Gane (barry.gane@avondale.edu.au)" <barry.gane@avondale.edu.au>
Subject: RE: IRB 18-118 Application Approval -- Parker

Dear Jeffrey,

Congratulations! Your IRB application for approval of research involving human subjects entitled: "*Developing a new ministry model for engaging millennials in church life in the Australian Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*" IRB protocol # 18-118 has been evaluated and determined Exempt from IRB review under regulation CFR 46.101 (b) (2). Please find attached your letter of determination.

Thank you.

This message may contain both confidential and privileged information intended only for the addressee named above. If you are not the intended recipient you are hereby notified that any dissemination, distribution or reproduction of this message is prohibited. If you have received this message in error please notify the sender immediately, then destroy the original message. Any views expressed in this message are those of the individual sender.

Mordekai Ongo

Research Integrity & Compliance Officer
Andrews University
4150 Administration Dr
Berrien Springs, MI 49104-4910
Tel. Office: 269-471-6361
Email: irb@andrews.edu

From: IRB
Sent: Wednesday, October 17, 2018 3:49 PM
To: David Penno <penno@andrews.edu>
Cc: JeffParker@adventist.org.au; Barry Gane (barry.gane@avondale.edu.au) <barry.gane@avondale.edu.au>
Subject: RE: IRB 18-118 Application-- Parker

Dear Jeff,

This is to acknowledge receipt of your application for human subjects' research. It has been assigned a tracking number IRB 18-118. We ask that you reference the protocol number in all future correspondence regarding this study for easy retrieval of information.

Your application will be screened for completeness prior to review. During this period we may ask for additional information or clarifications if/and as needed.

Normally, feedback on Exempt from IRB Review applications will be returned to the Principal Investigator (PI) within one week of receipt of the complete application, feedback on Expedited Review applications within two weeks, and feedback on Full Review applications within three days after the IRB meeting at which it is evaluated, assuming all required documents have been received.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 269-471-6361 or via email at irb@andrews.edu.

Thank you.

Mordekai Ongo

Research Integrity & Compliance Officer
Andrews University
4150 Administration Dr
Berrien Springs, MI 49104-4910
Tel. Office: 269-471-6361
Email: irb@andrews.edu

From: David Penno

Sent: Monday, October 15, 2018 3:25 PM

To: IRB <irb@andrews.edu>

Cc: JeffParker@adventist.org.au; Barry Gane (barry.gane@avondale.edu.au)
<barry.gane@avondale.edu.au>

Subject: Parker IRB Application

Mordekai,

Attached are the documents for Jeffrey Parker's IRB application. Blessings.

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Protocol for the IRB Application

This project is part of a Doctor of Ministry (DMin), research paper for Andrews University,
Berrien Springs, Michigan USA.

Title and Purpose of the study

Title: *Developing a new ministry model for engaging millennials in church life in the Australian Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.*

Purpose of the study: The aim of this project is to develop a new ministry model for engaging millennials in the Seventh-day Adventist church of Australia. Millennials are defined as being born between the years of 1981 to 1996. Current and former members, aged 18-37, from Seventh-day Adventist churches across Australia, will be surveyed via an online questionnaire (Survey Monkey or similar). Participants will be asked to respond to specific questions in relation to demographics, families, intergenerational connections and interpersonal relationships within church settings. The findings from this survey, will be used to develop a new ministry model for churches to better engage its millennials in church life.

Subjects: Participants will be past or present church members aged between 18 and 37. To the best of the researcher's knowledge there will be no inclusion of any of the vulnerable groups of society (no prisoners, hospital patients, mentally impaired, or pregnant woman etc.).

Recruiting: Participants will be recruited for this study via a social media survey. The survey will not involve any face-to-face interviews and all responses will be treated in a

confidential manner. There will be no pressure or coercion to join the study. Participation in this survey is voluntary. Participants will have the option to leave the study at any time if they feel it is not for them. There is no penalty or loss of benefit for refusal to contribute to this survey. This study has adopted an open agenda with no deliberate concealment or deception.

Consent: All participants will be over the age of 18. By submitting the completed survey participants have given their consent. This consent will outline the purpose of the study, the duration of the study, the benefits and risks of the study. It will also outline that the study is totally voluntary and that all information will be completely confidential. All participants will be over the age of 18.

Voluntary Participation: Participation will be voluntary. Subjects will be free to join or leave at will without penalty or loss of benefits.

Procedures: Participants from Seventh-day Adventist churches across Australia, will be surveyed via an online questionnaire. Responses will be evaluated and compared with current research that relates to millennial engagement in church settings.

Risk: Participants in this study will be subject to low risk. The questions will be general in nature and are outlined in the attached sample survey below.

Data: Data will only be collected via an online survey. Results will be collated and tabulated after completion.

Securing the Data: The data collected by the survey will be treated confidentially. Being an online survey the researcher will not have access to the names of the participants. Data collected will be stored on a hard drive at Head Office, Seventh-day Adventist Church, 289 Maroondah Highway, Ringwood, Victoria 3134. Any hard copy material will be kept in a locked cabinet in the same location.

Jeffrey Neil Parker

(DMin) – Millennial Church Doctoral Studies

APPENDIX D:

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT SUMMIT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Youth Engagement Summit recommendations were voted by the Australian Union Conference on May 18, 2018 as a set of recommendations for the church in Australia. This was a specific set of recommendations for every part of the church in Australia, from the local church to conference and union levels. There were nine recommendations. Also included is an article summarising the Youth Engagement Summit by the “Record” (an Australian weekly church magazine).



R

GROWING YOUNG

CHURCH RESOLVES TO GROW
YOUNG, ENGAGE YOUTH 3, 8

NEWS

NEW WEBSITE CREATOR FOR
ADVENTIST PLACES 5

ADVENTIST RECORD | JUNE 16, 2018
ISSN 0819-5633

GROWING YOUNG: HOW TO SAVE OUR CHURCH

I was privileged to attend Australia's most important meetings recently. There were presidents and doctors and leading experts present. There was even a delegation from New Zealand! Although I had no particular expertise in the area being discussed, I did have a special interest and I was glad to be invited to report on the event.

What were these meetings, you ask? I was at the Youth Engagement Summit for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia (AUC).

Were they really the most important meetings in the country on that Sabbath morning? They were, according to Pastor Murray Hunter, special media officer for the AUC. And I tend to agree with him. We were discussing the very survival of the Adventist Church.

Our commission to make disciples and share the unique message of our faith is still as necessary as ever but our churches are growing older. Many young people are leaving the Church once they reach independence.

Don't despair though, there is good news. The issue is being tackled—there is agreement and unity of purpose across the Church in Australia and there are practical things we can do (corporately/locally) to help the Church grow young.

According to the Churches Engaging Young People study, there are six core commitments common in churches that are "growing young": empowering/giving responsibility to young people, empathising with them, making sure the church's message is centred on Jesus, having a warm, loving community, prioritising young people and families, and allowing young people opportunities to "neighbour" well (service in the local and global community). If your church doesn't look like this, there may be something wrong.

The strategies common to churches that grow young do not negatively affect other generations, but improve the health and growth of the church in all areas. The reality is that churches who grow young reach all generations more effectively. "In a kingdom win/win, stronger ministry to young people bulks up the ministry muscles of the entire congregation" (Powell, Mulder and Griffin, *Growing*

Youth, p 42). Maybe you can't change the culture of your conference or even your local church, but there are simple things you can do. Some of these things your church may be doing already. Some you may be personally doing. That's OK. It's always good to be affirmed and reminded.

Parents, it starts with you. According to youth and family ministry expert Chap Clark, parents are the "single greatest influence on a child's faith". Have family worship at home as often as possible. But involve the children, don't just speak at them. Let them read, ask questions or lead out.

And if you're a man, especially a father, the onus is on you. It's not popular to tell men to stand up and lead these days, but faith transfer has proven to be more effective when fathers demonstrate faith for their children.

IF YOUR CHURCH DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THIS THERE MAY BE SOMETHING WRONG.

So men, in your homes you need to take an active interest or role in faith building. Talk about your faith in front of and with your children. You may not have kids, or your children are adults and have moved away or left the church. You still have an important role to play. Mentoring and looking out for children are crucial. Let the children at church know they matter and you have their back. Identify children

in your church who attend without their father or don't have a father and invest in them, providing them with male role models.

Be strategic. Speak to other men at church and see who is interested in investing in young people this way so that no-one is left out.

Speak to a young person (or three) in your church (find out their name) and ask them what they would like you to pray for in their lives. Commit to praying for them every day and when you see them at church again, tell them you've been praying for them and ask if there is anything else they'd like prayer for.

Do these things on a regular basis and our children will feel like valued members of our church community. They are not the future, they are the present.

JARROD STACKELROTH
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"Young women at Youth
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HOT TOPICS



CHRISTIANS ATTACKED

Suicide bombings on May 13 at three churches in Surabaya, Indonesia's second-largest city, killed 12 people and injured at least 40. The perpetrators were all members of one family—a man, his wife, two young children and two teenage sons—who all died in the explosions. Though offering no evidence, Islamic State has claimed responsibility in what it called "a martyrdom operation". —*NY Times*



ENVIRONMENTAL COW-CERNS

Studies have found that the methane released while cows slowly digest greens may account for up to 18 per cent of Europe's greenhouse gases. Denmark, which has committed to reducing greenhouse gases by 40 per cent by 2020, has come up with an interesting way to combat the issue: a national tax on cattle owners for cow flatulence, at \$110 per cow. —*CPH Post*



SACRILEGIOUS STYLE

The 2018 Met Gala, themed "Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination", recently caused a stir. Despite the theme being officially approved by the Vatican, Catholics have criticised the Metropolitan Museum of Art, accusing celebrities of blasphemy and "mocking" religion. —*Vogue*

CHURCH RESOLVES TO GROW YOUNG, ENGAGE YOUTH

JAPROD STACKELROTH

"What happens to all those kids in our Church," said Jeff Parker, youth director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia, "when around 62 per cent of young people who attend church leave before they're 30?" And with that challenge ringing in their ears, around 80 young people, youth directors and conference presidents began to work on some key action plans to allow the Adventist Church in Australia to "grow young".

Pastor Parker told participants to "dream big. Anything and everything is on the table." And around the table was where real strategising happened—with intergenerational and inter-conference brainstorming and dialogue.

After keynote presentations on a variety of topics—including the importance of family in passing on faith, inter-generational and inter-cultural worship—delegates were given the opportunity to engage with focus questions around their tables, with ideas and feedback compiled and reported back at the end of the weekend.

According to the 2017 AUC church attendance survey, the largest age group in the Adventist Church is 5–14 years, followed by a significant drop in the 15–24 year bracket.

As a sign of how seriously the Church is taking this conversation, South Pacific Division president Pastor Glenn Townend joined the meetings for some time on the Friday; Pastor Jorge Munoz, AUC president, was present and involved throughout; and every conference president attended except one—the general secretary of that conference attended instead.

"This challenge belongs to all of us—every department, institution and every member," said Pastor Brendan Pratt, AUC ministerial secretary. "Having AUC administration and all the departments working together on the event was in itself an attempt to model that this



DELEGATES OF ALL AGES SAT AROUND TABLES TO DISCUSS THE BIG ISSUES.

Photo: Murray Butler

challenge belongs to all of us. Youth and children's ministry leaders have been doing an amazing job in this space for many years, however the solution is not one or two departments but all of us."

Another significant milestone was the inclusion of a delegation from New Zealand, who were able to observe and take part in the conversations. While acknowledging the different cultural contexts, the team from NZ saw cross-over in many areas.

On the final day of the summit, conference delegates voted on nine resolutions, including measurable actions that will keep the Australian Church accountable and help to determine progress. These broad strategies include intentional prayer, empowering families, connecting, collaborating and discipling young people, communicating and synergising the strategies throughout all levels of the Church, and an overall emphasis on growing young.

"It is imperative that the recommendations turn into tangible actions that make a difference," said Pastor Pratt, who along with other members of the AUC team, helped to plan and execute the weekend.

"We're really excited about these nine recommendations and we just hope and pray that the future is going to be really strong for our Church and youth and young adult ministry," Pastor Parker said.

Keynote presentations have been made available at disciple.org.au.

Youth Engagement Summit Recommendations

As delegates to the AUC Youth Engagement Summit, we affirm the pivotal role of engaging our children, youth and young adults and call all members to affirm these recommendations.

Through the Holy Spirit's leading and power, we, as the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia, commit to significantly lifting the engagement of children, youth and young adults in being a thriving, disciple-making movement. We will demonstrate to our children, youth and young adults a positive picture of our loving God by being a grace-filled, Christ-centred, Spirit-led authentic community. We aim to not simply keep our children, youth and young adults connected to the church but rather engage them in being the church.

In being this inclusive community, we vote to endorse the following recommendations:

Recommended that:

1. We lift the intentionality of prayer for our children, youth and young adults.

-We call all members to commit to intentionally praying every day for at least one young person and then actively engaging with them. We will foster strategies that encourage this focus in an ongoing way.

-We will engage and extend our current prayer ministries and networks to be actively praying for our young people and the initiatives we are working on in terms of engagement.

Measurable – Youth focused prayer champions in every school and congregation

2. We empower families as the primary place of faith development.

-We will collaborate to find effective ways to assist families in recognising the home as the primary place of faith development. This will include resources that will guide families in creating and sustaining a strong spiritual foundation and emphasis in their everyday family life.

-We will particularly equip and resource fathers in view of their influence in developing a child's picture of God, faith and engagement in our faith communities.

Measurable – an ongoing selection of relevant, current and engaging family life resources that are specifically designed to strengthen spiritual life of our families available at disciple.org.au – measure uptake.

3. We invest in growing Authentic Biblical Intergenerational Communities.

-Resource and equip members to fuel warm communities and play an active role in creating inclusive communities with a focus on empathizing with today's young people.

-Model, resource and promote intergenerational connection in the life of the local church and at wider church events.

-Promote, resource and equip mentorship initiatives

-*Measurable - move our Australian National Church Development (NCD) measurement for loving relationships (44.4) from second bottom to at least second in our NCD profile*

4. We synergise strategy in all areas of church life for the sake of engaging and discipling our children, youth and young adults.

-At all levels of church life in our country we commit to collaboration, sharing and synergising strategy so that silos that negate effective ministry are broken down for resources and expertise to be shared and reach to where they are most needed.

-Affirm youth engagement as a key priority in the AUC strategic plan and encourage all areas of church life to collaborate in making it a key focus area for their strategies.

-We commit to having the AUC leadership team and board of directors regularly reaffirming, reengaging with and noting progress on the strategy. Youth engagement will be a standing item for the AUC board and we encourage the same commitment from the division, conferences, schools and local churches.

-Disciple.org.au will become our central resource hub where all departments, leaders and members can share and access resources that focus on children, youth and young adults.

Measurable – Youth Engagement features prominently in strategic plans at all levels.

5. We, as role models, commit to resourcing and equipping our children, youth and young adults as disciples who take the message of Jesus seriously. This includes a focus on apologetics that integrates Adventist identity into everyday life and equips our youth for positive engagement in our world.

-Use disciple.org.au as a central hub to synergise the faith-development resources that already exist for children, youth and young adults and address resource gaps. By so doing we will ensure that parents, teachers (Schools, Sabbath Schools, Adventurers, Pathfinders), small group facilitators and leaders are readily resourced to share our Adventist Identity and beliefs in ways that engage and impact everyday life.

-We will use Adhub to intentionally track decisions of our young people as they grow in discipleship including baptism and beyond.

-Enhance tertiary chaplaincy and connect more intentionally with students as they transition from high school.

-We will implement a media strategy that engages young people with relevant, creative discipling media resources.

Measurable –AUC attendance survey moves the youth self-score for relationship with Jesus from 10% growing strongly and 50% growing to 25% growing strongly while maintaining 50% growing.

6. We endorse and actively support the Growing Young strategy and with it the unlocking of 'keychain'* leadership and the prioritization of young people, families and intergenerational relationships.

-Develop, foster and support Growing Young pilot programs within conference churches and schools.

Measurable – number of initiatives operating in each conference

7. We encourage and resource our local church and school leadership teams to participate in the children, youth, young adult engagement discussion and local strategy development.

-Create guides and promote media resources that help local church and school leadership facilitate the discussion in their context and then work with them on resourcing, training and equipping that strategy.

-Facilitate and communicate relevant Australian research regarding Adventist children, youth and young adults.

Measurable – All conferences engaged in a plan to facilitate the local church discussion process. Research made easily accessible.

8. We leverage influence in endorsing and resourcing children, youth and young adults, to be actively involved in service, mission and volunteerism with a particular focus on developing and engaging young leaders.

-Champion through our communication channels children, youth and young adult engagement and 'give permission' in the local church and school.

-Engage young people in creating relevant disciple-making media.

-Strengthen and extend the reach of strategies that foster the serving and leadership capacity of our children, youth and young adults. We will foster opportunities for young people to serve others, pursue social justice, find their calling and interact with the world around them.

-Actively model and promote the inclusion of young people in influencing and shaping the direction of the church including youth advisories and active inclusion/engagement in the decision-making processes.

Measurable – AUC attendance survey measure for youth serving and involvement increases by 25%.

9. We strengthen institutional partnerships with a focus on our children, youth and young adults particularly the links between Home, Church and School.

-Intentionally foster the links between church and school, highlight where it works well and promote models and strategies that foster this connection.

-Work with education and pastoral ministry teams to enhance the ministry connection and establish a common ministry philosophy between teachers and pastors. Avondale College of Higher Education will be invited to join us in this strategy.

-Recommend to the chaplaincy working party an increase in chaplaincy and youth pastoral care to enhance opportunities in schools and universities.

-Put in place strategies that extend the reach of school evangelism initiatives and establish schools as partners in outreach ministries.

Measurable – An increase in the Quality Adventist Schools measurements on church, home and school collaboration and improved chaplaincy student ratios.

*Keychain leadership is the term used in the 'Growing Young' resource in reference to a pattern of leadership that encourages, facilitates and empowers young people to lead in the life of the church. Drawing from stages of life that include young people being given house, car and workplace keys, the 'key' is used as a symbol of access, influence and responsibility.

1 – Pray

2 – Empower Families

3 – Connect

4 – Collaborate

5 – Disciple

6 – Grow Young

7- Communicate

8 – Engage Participation

9- Synergise Strategy

APPENDIX E:

FUNDING PROPOSAL FOR “GROWING YOUNG CHURCHES AUSTRALIA”

This funding proposal was worked out by a team of youth directors from across Australia and submitted to both the Australian Union Conference and South Pacific Division. The proposal was successful and the “Growing Young Churches Australia” began in the summer (February, 2020). Soon after its launch across Australia its name was changed to “Growing Together” as it matched our focus on intergenerational connections within the church.



2019/20 SPD Project Funding Application and Implementation Plan

SPD Mission

The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to call all people to become disciples of Jesus Christ, to proclaim the everlasting gospel embraced by the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12, and to prepare the world for His soon return.

SPD Vision

A thriving Adventist movement, living our hope in Jesus and transforming the Pacific

SPD Values

Enduring truth, Dignity and Respect, Unity in Diversity, Unconditional Love, Courageous Hope

Project Name

Project Name:	Growing Young Churches - Australia
Name of Applying Entity:	Greater Sydney Conference & Australian Union Conference
Project Sponsor	Jaffray Parker - AUC Youth Director & Simon Gigliotti - GSC Youth Director

Executive Summary

Greater Sydney Conference would like to partner with the Australian Union Conference and implement a number of Growing Young Cohorts, Australia wide, over a 5-year period - 2019 - 2023

A Growing Young Cohort is designed to bring together key leaders of local Churches and train, equip, and inspire them with tools they need to help their Church Grow Young (See below for more detail - Ministry Business Case & Appendix 1). Local Church leaders would attend two Growing Young Summits per cohort and then be coached via webinar and personal meetings over a full year. Please note, a Cohort is not a one-off weekend program that Churches attend, but a year-long coaching process for local Churches that participate (see appendix 1 for an outline of what takes place in a Cohort).

The key focus is not only investing in the next generation, but also strengthening local Churches for mission. When implemented in a local Church, Growing Young philosophy is designed to revitalise the entire Church and mobilise leaders to expand mission. We want to see a thriving disciple making movement across the country, and we believe the local Church is the place where this starts.

5:

For the first year of the project, in consultation with Australian leaders in the Seventh Day Adventist Church, this journey would be guided by Fuller Youth Institute, and the authors of the book 'Growing Young' – Jake Mulder, Brad Griffin, Kara Powell. Over the next four years the project would be guided by local Adventist leaders from Australia, and apostolic Adventist coaches from the Growing Young Adventist Network in the North American Division. To get a snap shot of what a Growing Young Cohort is about watch this video put out by NPUC who are already deep into the process - <https://vimeo.com/266163282>

*To get a bird's eye view of what the Growing Young Project will look like in our context, please see Appendix 1 – page 14.

*To see the breakdown of Fuller Youth Institutes Pricing, see attached 'Memorandum of Understanding' & Appendix 2.

1 Ministry/Business Case

1.1 The Opportunity

There are three key opportunities with the above mentioned Growing Young project:

1. **Empowering and investing in the next generation** – Youth retention in the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Australia is a huge issue. We are losing nearly half our young people as they transition from High School to University (The National Adventist Attendance Survey – 2017 showed that 18 % of attendance in the Adventist Church in Australia comes from the 5-14 age bracket, and 9.1 % of our attendance comes from the 25-34-year-old age bracket). Growing Young principles are designed to help local Churches focus on how they can invest in young people and empower them.
2. **Local Churches Strengthened** – The philosophy of Growing Young is that when local Churches focus on young people (and families), the whole Church benefits and is strengthened. McCordle Group have said that while 45 % of Australians claim to be Christian, only 15 % go to Church once a month, and only 7 % are active practitioners of Faith (Faith and Belief in Australia - 2017). Further, the most recent Australian census (2016) showed that 30 % of Australians are secular or identify with no religion. There is a huge mission field in our nation. We need our local Churches to be strong, disciple making movements if we are going to reach this nation. We would like to note here that young Australian Adventists in our time are passionate about revitalising their local Churches! At the recent AUC Youth Congress – Convergence an appeal was made for three things – 1. Be involved in Church Revitalisation 2. Plant a Church in the future 3. Enter full time ministry – as this recent article records – <https://second.adventistchurch.com/2018/02/20/young-leaders-developed-and-empowered-at-congress/> - 50 young people made significant decisions in this space.
3. **Expanding Mission** – As mentioned above, there is a huge mission field in our nation. We find examples of this in our cities. There are close to 5.6 million people in the Greater Sydney area. If we divided the population by every local Church, each congregation would have about 57,000 people to minister to. To put this in perspective, there are currently about 7,000 people in attendance on Sabbath in the Greater Sydney Conference. Sydney has huge amounts of room to expand mission. Melbourne has a similar demographic. Melbourne has a population of – 5 Million people and there are 106 Churches conference wide, with approximately 6500 people in attendance on Sabbath. If every Church was located in Melbourne, which they are not, each Church would have the capacity to reach close to 50,000 people. The above examples only cover two cities. There is a huge need to expand mission in Australia. **As Churches are strengthened through the Growing Young Project, leaders are developed who can branch out and expand mission through Church planting and the like. Local Churches will become sending hubs for a missional movement.**

1.2 Background/Context/Existing activity

The Growing Young philosophy was born out of extensive research undertaken by the Fuller Youth Institute - <https://churchevents.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Growing-Young-Research-Method-1.pdf> The six key practices for Churches that Grow Young include –

1. Keychain Leadership (Unlock young leaders)
2. Empathize with today's young people (Compassionate attitude)
3. Take Jesus' Message seriously (Teach the Gospel, teach the Bible)
4. Warm Relationships (Love people, warm communities are awesome)
5. Prioritize Young People (Don't give lip service, actually prioritize them)
6. Be the Best Neighbours (Serve our communities)

At the Australian Union Conference Youth Engagement Summit that was held in 2018 it was voted that: "We endorse and actively support the Growing Young strategy and with it the unlocking of 'keychain' leadership and the prioritization of young people, families and intergenerational relationships."

This action that was taken is now beginning to filter down into the local Conferences and local Churches.

- Greater Sydney Conference has Growing Young Churches as one of their 5 strategic focus points. We see a huge need to invest in the next generation, strengthen Churches, and expand mission. The Cohort would provide the perfect structure for us to engage key Churches and begin the journey. It should be noted here that this is why Greater Sydney are taking the lead in trying to get this project off the ground. We believe it needs to happen for the future of our Church in Sydney, and in Australia.

APPENDIX F:

ADVENTISTS AUSTRALIA – GROWING TOGETHER COHORT

Once funding was secured the Australian Union Conference in conjunction with six of the nine conferences began planning to implement a “Growing Together Cohort.” Churches in each of the conferences were shown what becoming a Growing Together church could do for the retention and engagement of youth and young adults. The first summits were held in February 2020.

ADVENTISTS AUSTRALIA GROWING TOGETHER COHORT

FACT SHEET

Fuller Youth Institute, co-hosted with the South Pacific Division, Australian Union, and South Queensland Adventist Church



Seventh-day
Adventist Church[™]
Australia



Pr Glenn Townend
President South Pacific Division
Seventh-day Adventist Church



Today's western culture highlights the difference between the generations in music, games, clothing and the like – however Jesus as the head of the church calls us to be one. We are to grow together. From my experience Growing Together does just that – enables us to understand each other and keep passing on the essentials of faith and truth in Jesus to the next generation."





Pr Jeff Parker
Youth Director, Australian Union
Seventh-day Adventist Church



Growing together has the potential to be an absolute game-changer for our Church. We could see intergenerational connections and intentional mentoring develop within our Church at a level greater than it's ever been before. I am so excited to see how God is going to move through the Growing Together cohort."



All churches grow old, but strategic churches are growing together.

OVERVIEW

Many Churches in western nations are both shrinking and aging as younger generations 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. Based on this study of a diverse group of churches, it was discovered that there are six essential strategies any church can use to better involve and retain young people. The results are found in the book *Growing Young* - see fulleryouthinstitute.org/growingyoung). What's more, they found that as these innovative churches engage younger generations, it breathes life and vitality into the whole church. Intergenerational connection and involvement is strengthened throughout the Church, and a sense of vibrancy fills the entire Church.

In 2020, the South Queensland Conference in partnership with Fuller Youth Institute, the South Pacific Division and Australian Union, is offering 30 Churches across South Queensland the opportunity to participate in a Growing Together Cohort. The journey will help to position the local church to engage younger generations in a way that breathes vitality, life and energy into the whole church. This advanced training model invites your team to journey with like-minded churches for one year:

- Two in-person summits that dive into the research behind *Growing Young*, foster small and large group discussions, and help you create a plan to implement new strategies in your church.
- Regular online webinars hosted by leading ministry voices from the Fuller Youth Institute and the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

- One year of personalized coaching, including support in developing a strategy for change.
- Access to the church-wide version of the Growing Young Assessment - a comprehensive online diagnostic test that sheds light on areas for growth and guides your steps.

Over a year long journey, the Cohort will provide your church with both a holistic philosophy and practical ideas to make much-needed shifts in your congregational culture today.

Join us for this cohort and be amongst the first church leaders within the Adventist Church in Australia to implement new strategies to grow young while creating thriving churches for all generations.

KEY DATES

- **Registration opens:** Early October 2019
- **Register:** sq.adventist.org.au
- **Registration Closes:** 4 November 2019
- **In-Person Summits:** These summits will be hosted in Brisbane on the below dates. *Venues are to be confirmed.*
 1. 22 - 23 February 2020
 2. 31 October - 1 November 2020
- **Webinars:** Webinars will take place every 1-2 months and will be scheduled a few months prior.

COST

- Subsidised rate of \$595 per church (Cohort journey usually costs \$4,000 USD per church). *Additional funding may be available upon request.*
- All program elements and most summit meals included for a team of 4 - 6 people from your church to attend both summits.
- All Webinars, access to a coach throughout the year, and church assessments are included.

** Please note that travel and lodging expenses for summits are not included.*

WHO SHOULD ATTEND THE SUMMITS?

Churches are invited to bring 4 - 6 team members to each summit. Here is an example of a leadership team: *Pastor, Elder, Young Adult / Youth Leader, Children's Ministries Leader & Young People*

In addition to considering youth and young adult ministry leaders or volunteers, we strongly recommend including a representative from both of the following groups:

- **Senior leaders** (senior pastor, associate pastor, elder, or a similar role). Given the key part that senior leaders play in the culture of the overall church, this research and the resulting resources have been especially designed to speak to their needs and interests.
- **Young Adults** (especially those in the 18-29 year-old range). Much of the discussion during the summits will focus on ministry to teenagers and emerging adults. You'll position your team to receive immediate and relevant feedback regarding potential opportunities and challenges by involving young people in the discussion right from the start

CAN YOU TELL ME MORE ABOUT THE CONTENT?

The content of the summits will begin by debunking many of the popular—and harmful—myths of what is needed to reach young people and create intergenerational connections. Then, through expert teaching from world class Fuller Youth Institute Growing Young team members and Seventh-day Adventist speakers, we'll explore the six core commitments of FYI's research. These commitments can unleash the passion of young people and inspire a Church to grow together:

Unlock keychain leadership: Instead of centralizing authority, empower others—especially young people.

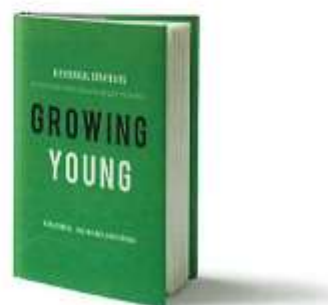
Empathize with today's young people: Instead of judging or criticizing, step into the shoes of this generation.

Take Jesus' message seriously: Instead of asserting formulaic gospel claims, welcome young people into a Jesus-centered way of life.

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

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.

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





Pr Alina van Rensburg
South Queensland Conference
Church Support & Development Team

The 'Growing Together' journey is about passing on legacy from one generation to the next. It's a cultural shift that moves youth and young adult ministry from the periphery to the heart of the local church where everyone can thrive.



SAMPLE SUMMIT SCHEDULE

(While some details are subject to change, the 8:30am start time is fixed for all summit days)

Summit Day 1:

8:30 am	Check in
9:00 am	Welcome, introductions, and research overview
10:15 am	Session 1 <i>(includes presentation & team time)</i>
12:00 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm	Session 2
3:30 pm	Break
4:00 pm	Session 3
5:15 pm	Dinner
6:30 pm	Session 4
7:30 pm	Dismissal

Summit Day 2:

8:30 am	Team Time and Breakout Pods
10:00 am	Session 5
12:00 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm	Core commitment idea sharing and brainstorming
2:45 pm	Team Time to determine next steps and Session 6
4:00 pm	Dismissal

FURTHER QUESTIONS

If you have additional questions please contact Alina van Rensburg, South Queensland Church Development and Support Team:
Mobile: 0403 150 496
Email: AlinavanRensburg@adventist.org.au





Benjamin Lundquist
Oregon Conference of Seventh-day
Adventists Young Adult Director &
North American Division Young Adult
Ministries Coordinator

At the heart Growing Young is a learning journey for cultural change, breathing life and vitality into the local church, while uniting all generations together for the cause of Christ

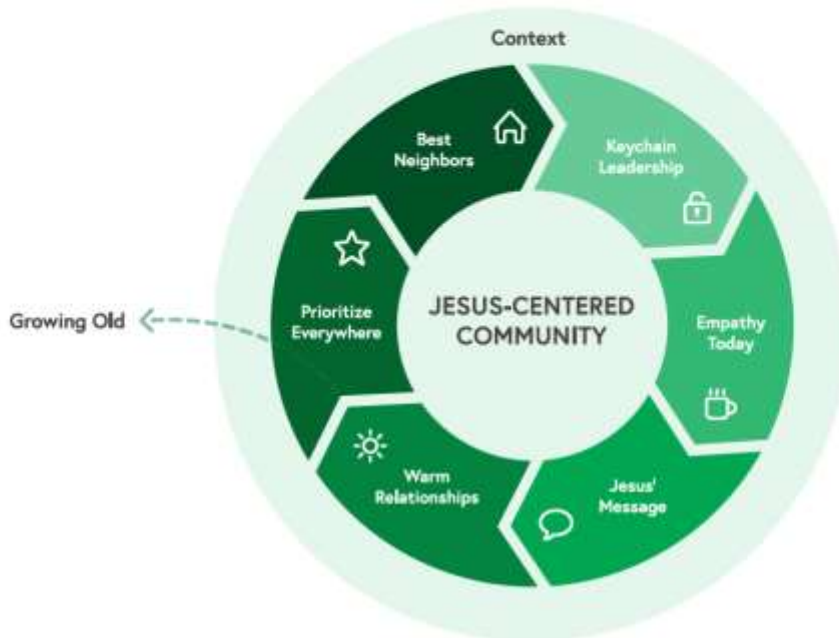


APPENDIX G:

GROWING YOUNG CORE COMMITMENTS

The foundations of “Growing Together” are based on the Growing Young research from Fuller Theological Seminary. There are six essential strategies to help young people discover and love their church

The 6 Core Commitments of Churches Growing Young



Unlock keychain leadership:

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

Empathize with today's young people:

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

Take Jesus' message seriously:

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

Fuel a warm community:

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

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.

Be the best neighbors:

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

APPENDIX H:

THE AUSTRALIAN UNION CONFERENCE STRATEGIC PLAN

As part of the next Quinquennium, the Australian Union Conference has put together a strategic plan which includes two significant areas that focus on both youth retention and youth engagement. A small part of that strategic plan for 2022 – 2025 is included



Leadership and strategic plan decided at first-ever online AUC session

By Lorraine Atchivie ■ September 6, 2021 ■ 12:09 pm ■ 552

The AUC constituency meeting held online.

For the first time, the Australian Union Conference (AUC) has held its sixth regular constituency meeting entirely online, using a virtual conferencing program.

More than 190 delegates from around Australia gathered online, on August 29 and 30, to receive reports from conferences and departmental directors and vote on items that will guide the AUC during this five-year period.

In addition to voting in new president, Pastor Terry Johnson, the delegates also voted in the new AUC Executive Committee, which has seen a change in numbers.

The committee has reduced its membership from no more than 40 members to no more than 28 members. The changes are reflected in the reduction of members who are employees of the church, such as AUC departmental directors and conference administrators. As a result, the representation of laypeople on the committee has increased from 33 to 43 per cent.

Over the course of the two-day meeting, special focus topics were presented and workshopped including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ministry (ATSIM), Youth, Church Structure Review and the strategic plan for the next quinquennium.

The AUC acknowledged the success and growth of ATSIM across Australia and being able to minister to First Nations people. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is the only denomination to have a national indigenous ministry approach such as ATSIM. The main priority for ATSIM is to be a link for reconciliation between the church and Indigenous communities. They also want to shine a spotlight on the work they do, reminding church members of the resources, services and support which they have access to. The delegates workshopped some ideas on how they could use ATSIM and what ATSIM could do to be mainstream in the Adventist community.

"The goal is for churches, conferences and agencies such as Sanitarium and ADRA, to be more interactive with ATSIM, to synergise our ministry efforts and reach our maximum capability," explained AUC ATSIM Director Pastor Darren Garlett.

Youth engagement and youth retention have been a top priority for the AUC and will continue to be as they progress into the next time period. Delegates discussed how the church has advanced since the AUC youth engagement summit in 2018 and what the church could do to create momentum in this sphere. In 2019, Pastor Jeff Parker, Youth Director at the AUC, conducted a survey with more than 400 responses from young people around Australia. Delegates were able to discuss some of the results, focusing on what young people are really wanting from church, how the church can create a welcoming atmosphere, and how to mentor young adults.

"The real desire and need that most youth have is for people to connect with them in church life, both in a formal and an informal setting," said Pastor Parker.

"The AUC is dedicated to working with local conferences and churches to create a movement which will see young people coming back to our church."

A presentation on the Church Structure Review was also provided, giving an overview on why it started and the journey so far. The different model options were explained along with the opportunities for the church in Australia. It was acknowledged that there was still quite a bit of work to do on this project which will continue when COVID restrictions allow.

The AUC's strategic plan continues to focus on creating a thriving disciple-making movement. The six key challenge areas for the next quinquennium to help them with this plan are youth engagement, health, media ministry, discipleship, mission and leadership. The AUC will work in harmony with the South Pacific Division and General Conference as they create initiatives and make changes to help them achieve their goals.

"We were extremely happy with the outcome of the meetings and how well the digital platforms worked for us over the two days," said Pastor Michael Worley, AUC secretary. "Although we were not physically in the same place with the delegates, we were inspired by the reports and able to have some important strategic discussions and presentations, allowing us to look forward and find more ways to share God's love with our community as we prepare for Jesus' soon return."

APPENDIX I:

DISCIPLE FOCUSED LIFE GROUP LEADERSHIP

A large portion of the Australian Union Conference's focus is on youth and young adult retention. A big proportion of our "losses" come when young adults move to university after finishing high school. This "Life Group Leadership" focus within Australia's secular universities is designed to work with "our own" Adventist students and support them during the university years. There is a major focus on mentoring and working intergenerationally to support our students.

-

Seventh-day Adventist Church

South Pacific

29 September 2022

Pastor Terry Johnson
Pastor Michael Worker
Peter Cameron
Australian Union Conference

Dear Officers

At the Division Strategy and Mission Committee meeting, which was held on Tuesday Sept 27, the committee considered funding applications for strategic projects. The following project/s were approved for your area:

Empower ministerial Convention (Project code 23AD001, over 1 year)	\$130,550
Faith FM (Project code 23AM004, over 3 years)	\$1,877,500
Family Worship (Project code 23AD002, over 3 years)	\$1,134,000
University Life Groups (Project code 23AD003, over 4 years)	\$197,320
Total (over 4 years)	\$3,339,370

The project titled *Family Worship* was considered and approved by the committee however, the committee has asked that further information be provided, as part of the first quarterly report, in relation to the following points;

- Steps that will be taken clarify the customer needs and establish demand for the resources created.
- A report on the use of current resources be prepared and tabled at the next committee in Nov.
- That AUC prioritise the use of Adventist entities for services in relation to the production of the resources
- That as part of the planning for the resources that consideration be given to the diversity of ethnicities in Australia.

Under the new Division strategic project funding model there are some key points to keep in mind as you begin working on your project/s.

1. 25% of the first year of approved funding will be made available immediately or after 1 July if it's the beginning of a new Division budget cycle.
2. Projects are expected to report their progress towards achieving their project milestones quarterly using a template that will be provided.
 - i. Project reports provide an opportunity to profile the successes that been achieved towards delivering the project milestones and achieving the mission objectives outlined for your project. Project managers are encouraged to include stories and photographs of the impact your project is having.
 - ii. Please include in your report a summary of the project income and expenses to date. If necessary, the Division Project and Treasury team may request do an audit of the project expenses should that become necessary.
3. Ongoing access to the remainder of the approved funds for your project is conditional on the timely provision of the quarterly project reports.

In some circumstances there will be projects that were approved under the previous funding arrangements. These projects will continue to be subject to the previous 6 monthly reporting obligations. It means that we will be operating in a hybrid environment until all active projects are under the new quarterly reporting obligations. In some circumstances for entities with multiple projects under both models please talk with me about how we can harmonise your reporting obligations for all projects.

May God richly bless as these funds are used to further the ongoing work in the South Pacific Division.

Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

With kind regards,

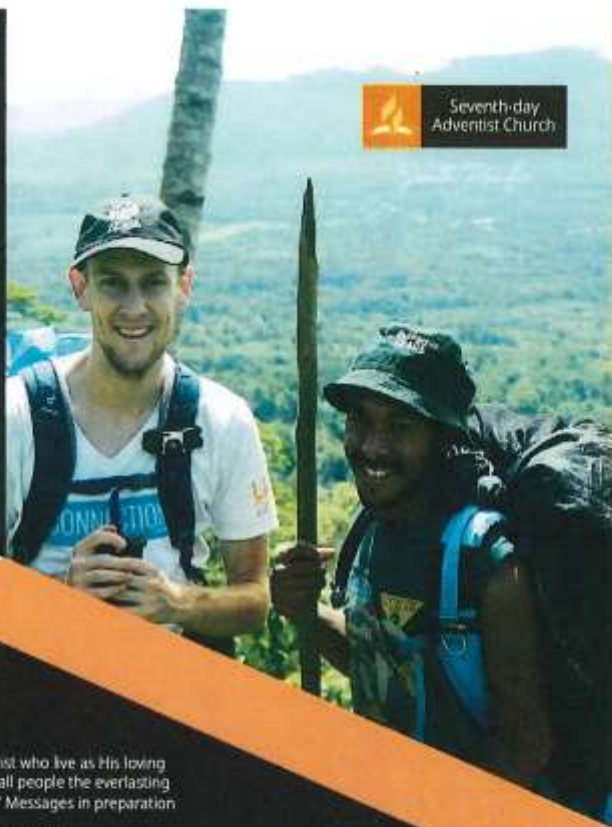
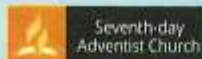
Kalvin Dever
Director Programs and Strategic Projects.

cc Andrew Wanka, Praveen Sagarathi, Leny Tukia, Seimi Bulelekutu
Seventh-day Adventist Church (SPD) Limited
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SPD PROJECT FUNDING

Application And Implementation Plan



SPD PURPOSE
To Inspire Hope and Wholeness of Life in Our Communities.

SPD VISION
A thriving Adventist movement, living our hope in Jesus and transforming the Pacific.

SPD MISSION
Make disciples of Jesus Christ who live as His loving witnesses and proclaim to all people the everlasting gospel of the Three Angels' Messages in preparation for His soon return. (Matt. 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, Rev 14:6-12)



Project Name

Project Name: <i>DISCIPLE FOCUSED LIFE GROUP LEADERSHIP - in Australian Universities</i>
Name of Applying Entity: <i>Australian Union Conference</i>
Project Sponsor: <i>Australian Union Conference</i>
Union Approver: <i>AUC ADMIN TEAM - Terry Johnson, Michael Walker, Peter Cawston</i>
SPD Arena Leader Consulted: <i>Kevin Omer</i>
Proposed Project Manager: <i>Pt Jeff Parker - AUC Youth Director</i>

Executive Summary

Disciple Focused Life Group Leadership is an intentional incarnational reach into unreached University campuses of Australia.

Disciple Focused Life Group Leadership would see the placement of young adult university students within the university in an endeavour to set up life groups on the secular campus. The goal is to stop the massive exodus of Seventh-day Adventist young adults and to further initiate kingdom growth with secular university students.

Disciple Focused Life Group Leadership is designed to develop and grow powerful "Life Group leaders" (LGLs) with support at 5 levels. These levels include: SPD MSD Team, the AUC Youth Department, the youth director team around Australia, the local church, and a group of mentor/coaches who would work closely beside the LGLs. See Appendix 1 for an overview of a Life Group Leader (LGL).

1 WHY? (Section 1 is about establishing why your ministry project should be funded)

1.1 The Opportunity

The Seventh-day Adventist church has virtually no impact on secular universities within Australia in 2022. After the recent issues with COVID 19 an already weak university ministry is on its knees.

Barna Group say that 72 % of young people who attend church in Australia drop out of church life as they transition into university/young adulthood. This is very sobering. Our team of youth directors around Australia sense this urgency and have come up with a proposal called [Disciple Focused Life Group Leadership](#)

Our teams of Youth Directors are passionate about seeing a number of things happen on the university campuses. **Growing Together**, which has been improving church culture and strengthening intergenerational connections within the local church over the last 18 months, has prepared churches for the support they need to offer to the LGLs as they move into this incarnational ministry. The churches who are taking part on the **Growing Together** journey will be the first churches to be considered as host churches.

[Disciple Focused Life Group Leadership](#) believes that change can happen in the following ways.

1. The ability to offer our Adventist students support in an anti-Christian university climate
2. The ability of our LGLs to reach students outside of our church who are within the secular university.
3. To grow both these groups into a stronger relationship with Jesus Christ and to help them find their place in God's service. We desire to see these LGLs, and those who they have reached through the life groups, to be intimately connected with a local church or a new church plant.

We believe that [Disciple Focused Life Group Leadership](#) can make a difference in the lives of many university students from 2023 and beyond; keeping our SDA students from sliding away and fostering real kingdom growth in the process.

1.2 Strategic Alignment

This proposal aligns with the Church Ministry Arena of the SPD Strategy House. It also aligns with the AUC Strategy house voted via the AUC Executive Committee in May 2022.

The key areas of focus include:

- Training and equipping LGLs to run strong Life Groups within the university campuses
- BEING A POSITIVE INFLUENCE FOR CHRISTIANITY WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY
- Providing resources for the operation of these life groups
- Formal and informal coaching/mentoring for our LGLs
- An intentional focus on keeping our SDA students growing for Christ in a secular university environment
- An intentional move toward growing the number of non – SDA participants in Life Groups
- Intentional Discipleing of those involved in Life Groups
- A deliberate focus on missional leadership within Australia's secular universities.

1.3 Assumptions/Constraints/Dependencies.

What Resources do you already have? (Assumptions)	What will limit your projects success? (Constraints)	What does your project need from others? (Dependencies)
<p>Youth ministry is already very active in many churches around Australia. We have 1000s of youth, young adults, and their leadership teams in church. We have access to "an army" of people ready to support our teams of LGLs as they move into secular university campuses.</p> <p>We believe churches that would be chosen to support LGLs would be churches that are already part of the Growing Together journey and be "Young Adult Friendly" churches.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy in from the local churches would be the main limiter to the success of this project. Generally youth ministry is well respected in the local church setting. • Many local churches lack intentionality in terms of a strategic missional approach. Many churches are just doing business as usual. <p>Another challenging are is gaining access into the secular universities that are pushing Christianity further and further away.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth ministries needs the rest of the church to work closely with us. It is our desire to work closely with the other departments of the church (ministerial, personal ministries, education, children's ministries, ATSIM, etc.). • The more that we can collaborate with other departments, the more successful we can be in growing LGLs as missional leaders.

The local churches that will be aligned to the LGL program will be churches that love and care for their young adults already.		Setting up our LGLs in the secular Universities is going to require all the support we can get.

1.4 Organisational Capacity

The overall program would be managed and coordinated from the AUC Youth Department. The AUC Youth Department will oversee this proposal. Our youth ministry teams in every conference are behind this proposal and are moving toward the process of implementing *Disciple Focused Life Group Leadership* in 2023 and beyond. *Local conferences are behind this proposal already. Conference administration teams have approved funding and support for this project already.*
SEE APPENDIX 2 FOR CONFERENCE SUPPORT FOR 2023 AND 2024

1.5 Project Details

What do you need to make the project successful?	What does your project create or do for others?	What impact do you expect your project to have? (These are Outcomes)
<p>Secular Universities</p> <p>A new initiative. Vibrant young adults who are willing to be a key person involved in university life – 2 per university. These key young adults would need to be trained, resourced and supported in the role. This role would include: Being a university student in that university. Taking a lighter load during the year to actively set up a university life group on campus. Receiving a weekly stipend to help with their expenses. Funding support for resources/meals with the life groups.</p>	<p>Secular Universities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secular University ministry small group resources • On campus Leadership development opportunities, retreats etc. • Forums for discussion on topics of faith and life • Mentoring and or tutoring of students in practical life issues 	<p>Secular Universities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key young adult life group leaders developed in secular universities • Professional networks of students and graduates who are invested in leading others in Kingdom activities • Unchurched tertiary students brought into a saving relationship with Christ and His church • Better retention of Adventist students entering secular university campuses • Baptisms <p>Facilitating the shift from a consumer mindset to a missional mindset with many Adventist Students on campus</p>

SEE APPENDIX 2 FOR GREATER DETAIL		
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1.6 Project Finalisation and Review.

In this section please outline how the project will be evaluated during and after the project has finished. It can be useful to include references to the project outputs and outcomes identified earlier. While determining how a project will be evaluated it may be useful to consider 3 questions: What worked well? What could we improve? What new thing could we try?

AJC youth in conjunction with AJC Education (Mark Hanson) will set up a full evaluation of the project year on year. Benchmarks will be set and target dates will be outlined. There are a number of KPIs that will be tested with a 6 monthly evaluation taking place. These reports will be sent to the local churches involved, Conferences, Unions and Division, and the team of mentor/coaches who are taking part on the process.

1.7 Plans beyond the project funding horizon.

Please outline your plans for sustainability of the project once the Division funds have been used up. (Once the project funding runs out what happens?)

Year 1 = pilot project – targeting 5 secular universities (AJC, Conference, and SPD funding) Year 2 = Project doubles in size to 10 universities (AJC, ASA, Conference and SPD funding) Year 3 = Project increases by 1 university (AJC, ASA, Conference, and SPD funding. Note in year 3 - more than 50% of the project would be funded by the conferences taking part). Year 4 are moving further away from the SPD support with year 4 only \$30,000. The goal is to see Disciple Focused Life Group Leadership become completely sustainable.

2 HOW? - Project Implementation Schedule

In the earlier phase outline the broad stages you will take to achieve your project to a successful completion – these are sometimes referred to as project milestones. To achieve

Milestones - the key steps to deliver the project.	Description/Notes <i>Enter any descriptive notes for each step.</i>	Start Date	Due Date	WHO
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SPD PROJECT FUNDING APPLICATION

6

<i>Use a single word or a short sentence to describe each step. Eg. Planning People</i>	<i>Eg. During the planning stage we will organise all the volunteers into teams and train them.</i>	<i>Enter the start date for each step. Eg. Beginning May 2020</i>	<i>Enter the due date for each step. Eg. End of July 2020</i>	<i>Who is responsible</i>
5 universities chosen	These universities are already locked in for 2023 – see Appendix 1	October 2022	October 2022	AJC will oversee the process in conjunction with, local church, conference admin teams and Conference Youth Directors
Local host churches chosen for each location	These churches must be "young adult friendly"	October 2022	December 2022	AJC will oversee the process in conjunction with, local church, conference admin teams and Conference Youth Directors
LGLs chosen for each university	2 LGLs per university	December 2022	January 2023	AJC will oversee the process in conjunction with, local church, conference admin teams and Conference Youth Directors
Coaching and mentoring team chosen for each location	Coaches that can really relate to young adults and have a heart for mission will be so important here	December 2022	February 2023	AJC will oversee the process in conjunction with, local church, conference admin teams and Conference Youth Directors
LGL ministry begins in the universities	Supporting the LGLs will be key here	March 2023	December 2023	AJC will oversee the process in conjunction with, local church, conference admin teams and

SPD PROJECT FUNDING APPLICATION

7

				Conference Youth Directors
Mentoring and Coaching continues	Coaching and mentoring on a regular basis is the key to success for this program. LGLs will have this very regular support. The goal is to see a very positive university ministry being built.	March 2023	December 2023	AUC will oversee the process in conjunction with, local church, conference admin teams and Conference Youth Directors
Debrief of year 1	All parties involved in debriefing year 1	November 2023	December 2023	AUC will oversee the process in conjunction with, local church, conference admin teams and Conference Youth Directors
2024 – another 5 universities chosen	The makes a total of 10 funded universities – plus more funded by local conferences	November 2023	December 2023	AUC will oversee the process in conjunction with, local church, conference admin teams and Conference Youth Directors
The process continues for 2024, 2025 and 2026	The cycle continues each year with learning and improvements from the previous years added. In 2025 and 2026 another 2 funded universities are added into the proposal making it a total of 12 universities. Conferences will fund extra universities as well (2 are already funded in 2023).	January 2024	December 2026	AUC will oversee the process in conjunction with, local church, conference admin teams and Conference Youth Directors
Sustainability is developed	The program is developed and grows each year. Sustainability of the program is the goal. Funding from SPD is minimised each year and ends in 2026. All future funding comes from local conferences with support from ASA and the AUC Youth Department. Donations will be sort from the individual church members from year 2. The goal is to see success breed success. Local conferences will see how beneficial this program is and want to see it continue.	January 2024	Ongoing	AUC will oversee the process in conjunction with, local church, conference admin teams and Conference Youth Directors

3 Project Finance

3.1 Summary of Funding Sources (Over the life of the project)

Please copy from the excel spreadsheet below the summary figures for the project budget.

	Donations	Conf/Mission Contribution	Union Contribution	Division Contribution	GC funding	Advertiser Students Association	Total Funding
Project contributions in Local Currency:	\$15000	\$235000	\$60000	\$197320		\$10000	\$517320
Project Contributions in Union Currency:(FJD/NZD/PGK)							
Project Contributions in \$AUD:							

3.2 Detailed Budget

Please complete a separate detailed budget spreadsheet for each year of the project. Your detailed budget together with this document will form your project application.

4 Project Standards and Progress Reporting obligations.

4.1 External Conduct standards.

The following information is included as Australian Charities must comply with these standards when providing funds to external organisations, particularly overseas entities. More information can be found here. (<https://www.acnc.gov.au/for-charities/manage-your-charity/governance-hub/acnc-external-conduct-standards>)

4.1.1 Standard 1 - Activities and Control of resources

This standard requires an Australian Charity to take reasonable steps to ensure that the projects being funded overseas are consistent with the charitable purpose of the Australian entity and that money is used in an appropriate way

4.1.2 Standard 2 – Annual review of overseas activities and record keeping.

This standard requires an Australian Charity to keep a record of its activities overseas.

4.1.3 Standard 3 – Anti Fraud and Anti Corruption

This standard requires an Australian Charity to minimise the possibility that the funds will be used in a corrupt way and that conflicts of interest are managed appropriately.

4.1.4 Standard 4 – Protection of vulnerable people

This standard requires an Australian Charity to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of vulnerable people – including children.

4.2 Protecting children and Vulnerable people

All ADSAFE policies will be implemented. All teams will need to have relevant WWC checks and all names processed through the ADSAFE data base. The ADSAFE Code of Conduct will be signed off by each of the LGLS.

4.3 Protecting against all forms of Fraud.

Please outline how you will ensure that use of project funds are not used in fraudulent and corrupt ways.

All processes will be audited by AUC treasury staff – in turn by GC auditing team

4.4 Property Insurance.

If your project application includes funding of larger capital items please note that the Division Finance Committee will not approve the new project unless the applying entity can demonstrate current insurance policies covering existing property assets.

4.5 Progress Reporting Expectations.

PLEASE NOTE – Quarterly reporting on the progress and impact of your project in an important obligation as part of receiving the funding. Reporting is also an important task for the project manager and is needed to ensure future funding for the project. It is the project owners responsibility to ensure that project status reports are provided to the SPD Director of Programs and Strategic projects on time. Project Managers who don't provide the reports will put at risk any future funding for their project.

5 DECLARATION

The following undertaking is made by an authorised officer of *(Name of Applicant Entity)*.

I, *(authorised officer)*,

(Position) , submit this proposal and covenant to use all funds for the purposes for which they are provided, and to submit a written report within 90 days of the project completion date (provided above) that addresses the outputs, outcomes, and key performance indicators listed above.

In addition to the use of funds and reporting requirements, I agree and have verified, that where this project includes working with children and other vulnerable people the applicant can demonstrate knowledge of, and compliance with, Adsafe policies and recommended guidelines for such situations. (Please contact Adsafe directly if you need information on the policy and guidelines.)

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX J

What have you done(?): Church leadership positions and activities

There were 5800 words in the response to this question. What these responses reveal in general, is that many of these youth and young adults were very actively engaged in the function of their local churches, and on occasion at higher levels of church administration.

Local church list

Reading through the responses one finds that the list includes:

- Elders, the highest non-clergy position in the church
- Deacons, the male functionaries in holding together the practical aspects of the church: its tidiness, its maintenance, its day-to-day operation and its orderliness
- Deaconesses, the female functionaries in keeping the church operational, parallel to the deacons, but with more of a feminine touch
- Senior Sabbath School leader, directing the preliminary church meeting each Sabbath (Sabbath School precedes the Divine Service hour when each person attends the weekly class discussion on a designated biblical topic)
- Senior Sabbath School class teachers
- A range of age-related Sabbath School levels (seniors, youth, earliteens, juniors, kindergarten) including the leaders of each section and their assistants
- Church clerk, the official keeper of church records the one that writes up the minutes of the Church Board and Church Business meetings
- Youth leader, coordinating the activities of the youth and young adults
- STORMCO leader and staff (“Service to Others Really Matters”), a very practical evangelism outreach
- Pathfinder leader and assistants, analogous to the Scouting and Girl Guide activities of the church for the 10 to about 16 year age group.
- Social Committee leader and assistants
- Church treasurer, the task of dealing with church monies
- The welfare committee, originally called the Dorcas society (named after a socially conscious social worker in New Testament book of Acts)
- Public relations officer
- Worship coordinator and committee members, input into how worship transpires in the second hour-long so-called divine service, the hour that follows Sabbath School
- IT sound system (Audio-visual) and lighting leader and assistants
- Pianists and organists
- Church Board which has designated officers and some non-officer appointees
- Member of Conference Executive Committee

Employed by the SDA church

The list includes:

- Church pastors
- Church School teachers
- Local Conference staff
- Union Conference staff
- Division Conference staff
- Ancillary staff such as caretakers, supervisors, and others

In short one might say, this is an honour list. In spite of some churches that have not understood their youth as well as they might, this list shows that there has been some very good things happening.

APPENDIX K

The Growing Together success stories from churches around Australia.

Wollongong Seventh-day Adventist (GSC):

Wollongong Seventh-day Adventist Church applied the principles learnt at the Growing Together Summit and were able to take their ministry with young people to another level. They have seen many young people make commitments for baptism over the last couple of years and now boast around 60 young people per week in attendance at their local church. As noted in this video by their head elder - much of their success is based on getting young people involved and implementing the idea of “keychain leadership.”

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LpUff1j80xaSPjeE-ojJ01ApAyp3dhn0/view?usp=sharing>

Kellyville Seventh-day Adventist (GSC):

Kellyville Seventh-day Adventist Church is another great example. It is a vibrant church with large number of youth and children. It has used the framework of Growing Together to deeply impact their Church’s new vision document.

Here is a quote from one of their elders – Dr Ken Long:

“Kellyville Church is a church which is very strategic in its planning. Our 2020 Vision was developed in 2007 and was achieved in 2019. Last year we refreshed our Vision for 2030. Our church has practiced the Growing Together philosophy for many decades but when we refreshed our strategic plan last year, we incorporated the Growing Together philosophies into our strategy. We felt that it was important that these philosophies are part of the church strategy and not seen as a separate program.”

We are very pleased that Kellyville took this step as one of the key aspects of the Growing Together journey is to get churches to outline what we call – a VIVID description of the future. We are calling them to think long term and big picture as they do ministry and then set a strategy out to fit that. See Kellyville’s vision document attached here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ioqWvYyXhOSUgFJ9I5QmfiaCaB_EBoF/edit?usp=sharing&rtpof=true&sd=true

Maida Vale Seventh-day Adventist (WA):

Maida Vale Seventh-day Adventist Church in Western Australia saw an explosion of families and children attending church as they implemented principles. One member said –

“Growing together helped us become more intentional about building that nurturing culture, I think we’ve become more adaptable, definitely a lot more people involved, willing to be involved, more community minded, just more Jesus centred.” Another said - “We went from something like 20 adults and two kids to 50-60 adults and 15 kids.” See testimonial video at this link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NpODxIfa5WWVP5AoaThGkso-772OQsrV/view?usp=sharing>

Thornleigh Seventh-day Adventist (GSC):

Thornleigh Seventh-day Adventist Church in Greater Sydney were inspired to start a Pathfinder club as part of their journey. This led to a greater engagement of teenagers. The church is now sending this club, that was non-existent at the beginning of 2020, to the AUC Pathfinder Camporee in 2023.

Ashfield Seventh-day Adventist (GSC):

Ashfield Seventh-day Adventist Church in Greater Sydney were inspired to hold a series of meetings where the young people connected with the older generation to learn about each other.

Then – they moved forward to run a youth week of evangelism – that was led by the youth. This resulted in a number of people making a commitment for baptism.

Glenorchy Seventh-day Adventist (TAS):

Glenorchy SDA church is located in Tasmania. Here is a quote from the Conference Youth Director, Pastor Daniel Matteo, on how it's gone for that church.

“We've had one church take up Growing Together and mostly engaged an elder and the youth leaders (a couple). The church has now got a regularly meeting youth sabbath school, social program, youth involvement in assisting with worship services and evangelistic programs and are looking at a little mission project. That's going from basically nothing happening in the youth space a year and a half ago.”

Sydney Chinese Seventh-day Adventist (GSC):

Sydney Chinese church sent a committed core team to the Growing Together Summits.

Their Senior Pastor Daniel Chong reports:

“Growing Together has helped the Sydney Chinese Church in the following areas:

- 1) Unite the youth and their leaders to do things together. (Belonging and ownership).
- 2) Rejuvenate the church programs (worship, social, small group). Increase attendance and program quality.
- 3) Intergenerational participation (6-86 years old).
- 4) Discipleship and coaching among the teen and youth with the adult leadership.
- 5) Create vision and purpose for the youth to move forward.”

Gold Coast Central Seventh-day Adventist (SQLD):

Pr Greg Pratt – Church Support and Development Director reports:

Pastoral and leadership team right on board

Applied the principles producing their over videos and discussing the principles at a board and business level

Board meeting agenda is based around the 6 core principles as an approach to church life

Involvement of young people, church continues on an intentional journey of

Intergenerational church community

Young Adults and youth involved in church life and leadership on all levels

Significant growth of the church in families, currently have 200 under the age of 18 connected with the church and in process of building a children's ministry extension.”

LifeSwitch Missional Community (South QLD):

Pr Greg Pratt – Church Support and Development Director reports:

Pastor on board and formed GT team

Had “Couch Connect” on Friday nights during covid where they could share testimonies etc on the couch. Really intergenerational and really opening up to one another

Very service oriented, being the best neighbours

Missional communities based around houses and small groups

Worked through plans and involved young people and kids in the life of the church

Had 25 baptisms last year including a number of young people

Ipswich Seventh-day Adventist (SQLD):

Pr Greg Pratt – Church Support and Development Director reports:

Pastors on board

Had a GT team and intentionally worked implementing the GT principles

Implemented some experiments including dinners with (younger and older generations etc)

Youth and young adults involved in church leadership and life

Now a thriving and growing Intergenerational church community

Murgon Seventh-day Adventist (SQLD):

Pr Greg Pratt – Church Support and Development Director reports:

Church team came to summit, again Pastor on board

Small country church

Older members intentionally prayed over their children

Older members introduced contemporary songs in worship as that is what the young people wanted

Started a street BBQ for their neighbours in place of church lunch in their street to seek to be the best neighbours

Hillview Seventh-day Adventist (NNSW):

Hillview SDA church included Growing Together as a standing agenda item on their church board meetings and appointed a Growing together representative as a member of the board to be involved in key decision making. As a result of GT youth and young adults had increased ownership of and visibility in church services through regular youth Sabbaths and increased attendance at socials and church events.

Leongatha Seventh-day Adventist (Victoria):

Growing Together has been quite the journey, coming in a real inopportune season in Victoria with churches closed for weeks and months on end. Leongatha church which already had a healthy youth focus has been able to bounce back this side of the pandemic and is on a positive growth trajectory. This is due, in part, to the church continuing to apply the Growing Together principles throughout the pandemic.

While we see some great examples above, and we could note more, many churches did not put the work in on the ground, and therefore struggled to gain momentum. They simply came to the Summits, made some plans – but then largely didn't act on them.

We realise that COVID 19 did not help the process. With that said, however, some churches still managed to excel even with COVID overshadowing everyday church activity and our reflection is that – if Churches put the effort in – things happened. If they didn't, they didn't get results.

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VITA

Name: Jeffrey Neil Parker

Background: I was born in New Zealand on April 14, 1963. A son of a missionary I spent the first 8 years in a number of locations in the highlands of Papua New Guinea. I moved to Australia in 1972. I was baptized at age 12 (1975). I left home at 15 when my parents divorced and pursued a career in building. In 1992 I felt a strong calling to ministry and did both a BA and MA at Avondale College. After 3 years in pastoral ministry commencing in 1996, I moved into youth ministry at both Conference and Union level.

Family: I was married on August 28, 1983 to Robyn Satchell. We have 4 children. Renee (born in 1985), Matthew (born in 1988), Krystal (born in 1993), and Lleyton (born in 2002).

Education:

2002- 2005 MA Youth Ministry, Avondale College, Australia

1992-1995 BA Theology – Avondale College, Australia

1979-1983 Carpentry and Joinery Apprenticeship (trade certificate)

1974-1978 High school: School Certificate from NSW public high schools.

Ordained:

2000 Ordained by and currently hold ministerial credentials from Australian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Experience:

2014 - Youth Director - Australian Union Conference – Melbourne, Australia

2004 - 2013 Youth Director – North New South Wales Conference – Newcastle, Australia

1999 - 2003 Youth Director – Tasmanian Conference – Hobart, Australia

1995 - 1998 Pastor – South New South Wales Conference – Bega, Australia

1987 - 1988 Literature Evangelist – Greater Sydney