



## Connecting Young Adults in Ministries

### Assessment Tool

**Definition of Young Adult Ministry:** Young Adult Ministry is more than just having young adults present in your congregation. It is an intentional process of welcoming and involving young adults as full participants and vital members of a congregation. Young adult ministry involves providing an atmosphere in your congregation where young adults (aged 18 to 30) are treated as leaders in the community of faith whose gifts are respected and utilized, and who are integral to a dynamic, active program that aims to help them mature into the people God has called them to be.

#### I.) Young Adult Ministry Check-up

1. Are there currently young adults living in the community in which your congregation is located?

Yes                      Sort of                      No

2. Do you have young adult members in your congregation?

Yes                      Sort of                      No

3. Do young adults attend your church services regularly?

Yes                      Sort of                      No

4. Does your congregation actively reach out to young adults?

Yes                      Sort of                      No

**5. Do you have organized, well-thought-out mechanisms in place to help incorporate young adults into leadership roles in your congregation?**

Yes                      Sort of                      No

If so, describe:

**6. At each worship service at your church, is there at least one young adult involved in leading worship?**

Yes                      Sort of                      No

**7. Are there young adults in leadership roles on the Congregation Council, board and/or various committees/task forces in your congregation?**

Yes                      Sort of                      No

**8. Does your congregation have any ministries for which young adults provide primary leadership?**

Yes                      Sort of                      No

**9. Are there any current ministries or programs in your congregation that are specifically designed to minister to the needs of young adults?**

Yes                      Sort of                      No

**10. Are there ministries in your congregation that enable young adults to engage in outreach and service beyond the walls of your congregation?**

Yes                      Sort of                      No

**11. Does your congregation have meaningful conversations that address the questions, "What are my God-given gifts, and what would God have me do with them?"**

Yes                      Sort of                      No

**12. Do conversations include discerning a call to rostered ministry in the church?**

Yes                      Sort of                      No

**13. Do the rostered leaders in your congregation regularly tell their call stories?**

Yes                      Sort of                      No

**14. Do lay leaders in your ministry tell their call stories?**

Yes                      Sort of                      No

**15. In the past seven years has a young adult from your congregation attended seminary?**

Yes                      Sort of                      No

**16. Does your website attract young adults to your ministry?**

Yes                      Sort of                      No

**17. Does your congregation utilize social networking websites and social media?**

Yes                      Sort of                      No

### **Scoring:**

This is not to judge your congregation's efforts! Instead, this is intended to be a playful mechanism to help you gain perspective on your work in young adult ministry. (Remember: even the best baseball player only gets a hit 30% of the time!)

For every answer, record the following points:

Yes = 3

Sort of = 2

No = 1

Total Score = \_\_\_\_\_

### **Understanding your score:**

**40-51 = Active Connectors:** Your congregation has in place ways to welcome and integrate young adults into the ministry of your church. Your congregation honors the giftedness of young adults in its ministry and actively seeks ways to incorporate their gifts into the leadership. Be sure to continue to find ways to meet the changing needs of young adults as the months and years move forward. Ministries need to be as dynamic as the lives of these people.

**30-39 = Potential Connectors:** You may have some young adults around your church and some peripheral involvement, but you're still looking for ways to reach out to them and nurture them in deliberate and meaningful ways. How might you re-vision your ministry with young adults? It might be good to ask a few young adults to help identify the gap areas, or areas in which young adults show interest for involvement. Start a new ministry with young adults and have them lead it!

**29 or less = Searching for Connections:** You're at the point of beginning to consider the importance of connecting with young adults in ministries. Check out the suggested resources! Talk to young adults and learn from them! How might you expand young adults' involvement?

### **Taking The Next Steps:**

Want to know more about where each question puts you? We're glad you asked! Each question on the survey is broken down by answer (yes/sort of/no). Take time in group and personal reflection to: (a) further identify how active your community is currently in helping young adults discern their call to public ministry within the church; (b) use the background and ideas below as ways to "plug and play" or spark new ideas for your community to grow further as a Project Connect Connecting Ministry!

## **II.) Background and Ideas**

### **1. Are there currently young adults living in the community in which your congregation is located?**

**Background:** Many of our ELCA congregations serve areas which do not seem to include many young adults. "Seem to" is the important part of this phrase. Has your congregation taken a look at the geographical area around it? Have you looked at the statistics for the average age group living within three miles of your church campus? Are there schools, colleges, or coffee shops you pass on your way to church? Just because young adults are not in attendance on Sunday mornings does not mean they aren't in the community. Keep this in mind: you don't need to have a ton of young adults already in your church to do effective young adult ministry. Young adults seek real and genuine relationships with people of any age who will help them discern their call and vocation in the world.

#### **Becoming a Connector:**

- A. (Yes) Take a look at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) to check the average age of people living in a three-mile radius of your church.
- B. (Sort of) Is there another ELCA or mainline church doing active and healthy young adult ministry in your area already? Try connecting with them to offer relational support, presence, prayers or financial gifts to that ministry to enable it to grow further.

C. (No) Check with your synod, conference, local campus or outdoor ministry to see if there is a way for you to plug into leadership of and support for other young adult ministries.

## 2. Do you have young adult members in your congregation?

**Background:** Similar to question one, just because you don't see young adults on Sunday mornings doesn't mean they're not part of the membership of your church community. Many times, young adults are away at school, working on Sundays, involved with young children, or sleeping in. Taking a look at your church membership on a computer spread sheet may reveal that there are many young adults who are members, but who just aren't around too much.

### Becoming a Connector:

A. (Yes) If you've found several young adult members in town, find someone passionate and willing to lead to get something started. Try a large group event off-site and/or at a time other than Sunday morning. Check the ELCA or Project Connect websites for ideas of events to get this group started. Remember that young adults are searching for safe places to connect with others like themselves who are searching.

B. (Sort of) If you've found several young adult members who are out of town, reconnect with them online through Facebook or Twitter. Read their pages and build relationships through online interaction. Young adults still appreciate connections to their past and rituals of faith, so having their home church reconnect will build bridges for the future.

C. (No) If you've found that you don't have any young adults in your congregation, don't feel badly; you're not alone! The fact that you're doing this assessment indicates your interest in inviting and welcoming young adults into your congregation. Continue on with this assessment in order to discover some ideas that may help you take the first steps in starting a young adult ministry in your context.

## 3. Do young adults attend your church services regularly?

Yes

Sort of

No

**Background:** If young adults don't attend, put yourself in their shoes: would you? Stepping into the life, mindset, and needs of young adults can help you better understand why they might have moved away from frequent worship attendance. Does your worship style reflect their culture? Does it operate out of a model that doesn't speak to the culture of your young adults? Do you think a visiting young adult would be warmly and sincerely welcomed if they did visit your congregation? The good news is that young adults are searching for an experience of God and appreciate the rituals of the faith, but need them broken open in ways that are real for their lives. You have those tools in your worship gatherings: quiet, light, Communion, confession, music, conversation, and the Word.

**Becoming a Connector:**

A. (Yes) Take a look at the ELCA website for more information on young adult culture. (Check "Resources For Connecting Young Adults In Ministries" for these links.) What aspects of your congregation's culture can you tweak that will allow increased meaning for and participation of young adults?

B. (Sort of) Invite your young adults to plan and launch their own worship gathering or become active, meaningful leaders in your current practice.

C. (No) Go to a local church currently reaching that age group with your young adults and worship together. Gather for coffee afterwards to debrief the experience and see where it leads you.

**4. Does your congregation actively reach out to young adults?**

**Background:** Maybe you have discovered that you do have young adults present and active in worship or that there are many within your community. Good news! But what are you doing to intentionally reach out to them? Young adults need to be needed or they will find another place to go or path to follow. Studies continue to show a very high percentage of young adults who consider themselves spiritual people. Therefore, you have an open door to guide them in their faith journey and discernment process.

**Becoming a Connector:**

A. (Yes) Begin an intentional connection with young adults that focuses on relationships, conversations, and an experience of God. These are three major things that young adults are searching for. For instance, start a mentoring and discipleship program that matches every young adult with another person in the congregation to be in partnership with. Perhaps there could be a particular person in the congregation to facilitate this.

B. (Sort of) Begin to increase service opportunities offered at a time that allows young adults to plug in. Service and authentic experience are foundational for young adults building trust and connection with God. Take a group of young adults to a Habitat for Humanity build or volunteer at a local food pantry or soup kitchen. Encourage them to plan and execute their own servant experience. Take the time to intentionally debrief these experiences with the "where did I see God at work and God working through me?" questions.

C. (No) Begin to intentionally reach out in at least one way to young adults in your context, and do so with integrity. Reach out to young adults for their sake, not for your sake. If you're not intentionally reaching out to young adults, then you may unintentionally be excluding them from your congregation.

**5. Do you have organized, well-thought-out mechanisms in place to help incorporate young adults into leadership roles in your congregation?**

**Background:** Leadership and ownership are essential for young adults. If they are blocked out of leadership, they are blocked from the full experience. *The next two sentences were eliminated.*

**Becoming a Connector:**

A (Yes) Consider connecting your young adult leaders to the next, higher level of leadership or leadership training through conference, synod, ELCA or Project Connect initiatives.

B. (Sort of) Ask yourself if their leadership is real or token? How can you move your active young adults into a real leadership position that will help them sense a call to lead as well as attract other young adults into ministry? How can you offer support and mentoring to the young adults who are taking leadership roles?

C. (No) Start small. Find a current young adult and encourage her or him to be part of Council meetings (elected or visiting), or serve as a reader or assisting minister at worship. Encourage that young adult to recruit another young adult into similar leadership roles. Then encourage another...and another...and another.

**6. At each worship service at your church, is there at least one young adult involved in leading worship?**

**Background:** Young adults are one of the strongest affinity groups in our congregations; they tend to look around a congregation to see if there are others like them present. By having at least one young adult involved in leading worship at each service, your congregation makes it clear that young adults are both present and active in the life of the congregation. In addition to the regular, obvious roles in worship (that is, reading lessons, chalice bearing, ushering), consider innovative additions like Mission Moments when a young adult shares a recent outreach experience or tells about a mission trip they were part of and encourages others to get involved. Or, consider including a “testimonial” time in worship when a young adult leader shares how they see God at work in their life (for example, a story of reconciliation through practicing forgiveness, or a story where God’s hand was at work, whether he/she knew it at the time).

**Becoming a Connector:**

A. (Yes) Invite young adults to be part of planning their own young adult-targeted worship experience. Remember this doesn't have to be an earth-shattering, 300-in-attendance worship experience. Start small, and within a specific time frame (Advent and Lenten Wednesdays, Pub Church during the summer months).

B. (Sort of) Invite young adults to plan part of the service or proclaim the Word once in awhile. Listen for their gifts for leadership, and allow those gifts to become part of the worship experience or a special worship series.

C. (No) Start with one young adult. Even just reading the lessons, greeting, doing a solo or serving as a Communion assistant will allow other young adults to see someone "like them" up front in church.

**7. Are there young adults in leadership roles on the Congregation Council, board and/or various committees/task forces in your congregation?**

**Background:** Congregations “cross over” from tokenism with young adults to sincere engagement when they begin to place young adults in meaningful positions of leadership in the congregation’s governance structure. When young adults are nominated for serious roles in a church’s governance, it says clearly, “We take you seriously and are recognizing the gifts for leadership you bring to the table.” A cautionary note: young adults may not be interested in joining a traditional church committee that has no end in sight. This doesn’t mean they don’t respect the work that has gone on through such committees over the years. It might mean they are more interested in active, hands-on ministry where they see the results of their work in a more timely fashion. If your congregation does not have much success getting young adults interested in joining traditional committees, ask them if they have an idea for a new committee or task force of interest to them that could be started at the church. Who knows what exciting new ideas and leadership opportunities could come from this?

**Becoming a Connector:**

- A. (Yes) Have you had conversations with young adults about vocation? What do they love about their leadership roles within the life of the church community? Go out to lunch or have them over to dinner to hear their thoughts about leadership. Share your call story with them as well. Use the Project Connect resources of gathered Biblical call stories as a guide for monthly/weekly conversations with those young adults.
- B. (Sort of) Take a risk to follow the lead of one of the young adults. Set your council/team/committees’ current plan aside and encourage young adults to help set the direction for a particular ministry area.
- C. (No) Take time to discern “why not?” What walls (real or perceived) are in place that keep young adults out of leadership? Is it time of ministry, frequency of meetings, inside stories that block out new people, lack of vision, tradition for the sake of tradition? Try to break down one or more of those barriers before inviting young adults into leadership. This will help them not be quickly frustrated.

**8. Does your congregation have any ministries for which young adults provide primary leadership?**

**Background:** If your congregation really wants to get serious about young adults, let go, and let them take the lead. There is a tendency in our congregations to hold onto the reins and not allow young adults to take off and really lead. But their passion for Jesus and their ability to make things happen might surprise you. It might not look like ministry that has emerged from existing committees at your church, but that is the point of this exercise. Young adults know they are being taken seriously when they are given real leadership in the church; they also know when they are considered token leaders whose opinions and ideas aren’t really taken seriously. Let go! See where the Spirit may lead! Allow yourself to be surprised!

**Becoming a Connector:**

A. (Yes) You have probably learned the lessons of letting go of the reins and letting young adults lead. Keep doing what you're doing, but also continue to look for new ministries or task forces that can keep young adults engaged. By continuing to foster new ideas for ministries, you can keep young adults engaged, as well as open up new opportunities for newcomers. Also, realize that young adults (as well as older adults!) can tend toward cliquishness once they've established their core group. Continue to challenge young adults to look for and reach out to newcomers. Remind them of how it felt for them to be the new face in the seat who longed to make spiritual friendships with trustworthy people their age.

B. (Sort of) If you have done a few things in your congregation to engage young adults in primary leadership roles and they haven't worked out very well, take the time to ask "Why?" But don't ask this question of yourself alone or existing adult leaders. Ask the young adults directly. Let them ponder what works for them in engaging in primary leadership positions. Did people follow through on their commitments? Did they show up for meetings? Did people burn out quickly after an initial period of enthusiasm? Try to get the bottom of the "whys" and then work to do better in the future.

C. (No) Take a leap of faith and allow some young adults to occupy serious leadership roles in your congregation. Identify a few particularly gifted young adults, or recruit some from the community (from a local Habitat for Humanity office, social justice program in your community, neighborhood community center) if there are none already in your congregation. Let them take the lead in establishing a new ministry for your church. Trust them; they'll appreciate your sincere and serious interest.

## **9. Are there any current ministries or programs in your congregation that are specifically designed to minister to the needs of young adults?**

**Background:** Most congregations have intentionally developed ministries that address the needs of their people. Many have ministries and programs that help meet the needs of their children and youth, their families with children, empty nesters, and their older adults, whether working or retired. Too many congregations overlook the ministry needs of young adults simply because there seems to be fewer of them in the congregation. But if a congregation isn't ministering to help meet the needs of young adults, why should they be active in that congregation to begin with? Young adults face lots of challenges concerning family, friends, relationships, careers, money management, and much more. Congregations can minister to young adults by walking with them and supporting them as they navigate those challenges, and they can do so quite importantly from the perspective of faith.

### **Becoming a Connector:**

A. (Yes) This one is a no brainer for you! You already have the ministries and programs, so now it's a matter of helping those involved ask the right questions for discernment of what God would have them do in life. Use the Project Connect website for resources to help you transition your ministries into key connection points between participation and faith and vocational discernment.

B. (Sort of) You already have some ministries that help meet the needs of young adults in your context. Engage those young adults in your congregation in conversation to help identify other needs that may still need your support. Ask your young adults to help prioritize the ones that require the most immediate support, and explore ways in which you can help address them. Don't forget to engage young adults outside your congregation; they may have needs, spiritual or otherwise, that are different from those already in your congregation.

C. (No) Young adults may have different spiritual growth needs than other age groups in the church. What makes it even trickier is that there is not one answer. Even within the 18-30 age range, we may see three distinct groups of people: 18-22 college age; 22-25 post-college-what-the-heck-do-I-do-with-my-life age; and 26-30 potentially beginning a family. And in all those groups you have the potential of a "quarter-life crisis" (Google Margaret Feinberg's book *twentysomething: Surviving and Thriving in the Real World* for details). The first step in addressing needs is asking the question, "Who are we really trying to reach?"

## **10. Are there ministries in your congregation that enable young adults to engage in outreach and service beyond the walls of your congregation?**

**Background:** Young adults identify with the promise "to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth" (to quote from the Affirmation of Baptism liturgy in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*). They have grown up volunteering for school groups, and now they are looking for a greater connection between helping others and the Gospel they embrace. These activities might include work at a Habitat for Humanity site, a local soup kitchen or food pantry, retirement community, after school program, knitting caps for infants, creating a camp during the summer, engaging in green projects in the community. Opportunities abound in every setting.

### **Becoming a Connector:**

A. (Yes) Wonderful! Be on the look-out for new opportunities for young adults to serve in your community. Is there a new soup kitchen, homeless shelter, or after school tutoring program? You can also ask the young adults to start a new program within the congregation that reaches out beyond the building.

B. (Sort of) If you have ministry opportunities but very few young adults participating ask, "why?" Is it because of schedule or number of opportunities? Is it the type of ministry opportunity?

C. (No) What social ministry programs does your congregation engage in? Could any of these be extended outside the congregation? Take an assessment of the community surrounding your congregation. What new ministries are needed and possible? Ask the young adults in your congregation about what types of outreach and service they would like to engage in. Connect with other congregations in your area. See if they have ministry opportunities where you can partner together.

**11. Does your congregation have meaningful conversations that address the questions, “What are my God-given gifts, and what would God have me do with them?”**

**Background:** At every age we ask one another, “What are my God-given gifts, and what would God have me do?” Some congregations might engage in spiritual gifts assessments available on the ELCA website. Others might offer support through small group conversations or coffee talks. These conversations can occur with peers, respected leaders or mentors, Sunday School teachers, professors, rostered leaders, ministry team leaders, parents, and others.

**Becoming a Connector:**

A. (Yes) Great! Thank you for engaging in such important conversations that examine vocation and gifts we can use to serve God and others.

B. (Sort of) Maybe you have these conversations only with a certain age group. It is important to begin at an early age with these conversations. Then they become an integral and expected feature of congregational life. Examine biblical passages concerning different God-given gifts and how they work together for God’s mission in the world. These conversations can reach young adults at a time when many things seem uncertain or unclear, but when vocational identity is emerging and solidifying.

C. (No) Think of ways to actively start conversations about spiritual gifts. Strike up a conversation with a particular young adult you’ve noticed in worship or served alongside of in a ministry opportunity. One conversation can lead to another and then to another. Opportunities present themselves when young adults are met by people who are genuinely interested in them and who truly wish to know them.

**12. Do conversations include discerning a call to rostered ministry in the church?**

**Background:** It’s great to talk with young adults about their gifts, the things that they may be passionate about, and how they can come together in ways which serve God and help meet the needs of those in the world around us. Such conversations often include talking with young adults about the kinds of careers and professions they should consider for themselves. When discussing those various possibilities, remember to include the various forms of rostered ministry in the church (pastor, diaconal minister, deaconess, and associate in ministry). Rostered leaders often say they first considered becoming such a leader after someone else suggested the possibility to them. You can help others see possibilities they may not even know exist!

**Becoming a Connector:**

A. (Yes) Consider forming a discernment group in your ministry context, or connecting your young adults with such a group in your synod. Speak with your synod leaders or with the Project Connect leadership team about upcoming discernment retreats and other activities that may be of help to those young adults in your context who are considering whether or not they are gifted and called to be a rostered leader.

B. (Sort of) Remember to be intentional about including the possibility of rostered ministry in your individual and small group conversations with young adults in your ministry context. It can be hard to talk about the various forms of rostered ministry open to young adults if you don't feel you fully understand them yourself. Don't be embarrassed if that's the case! The ELCA website, your synod office, and the resource list accompanying this assessment tool all have resources to help you understand and explain the different forms of rostered ministry in the church. Use them if you need them.

C. (No) If you are already talking with young adults about how they can discern their God-given gifts, and the ways in which they can use them in service to God and neighbor, then start mentioning rostered leadership in the church as one of those ways. If you're not yet having those conversations but plan to, make sure to include introducing the possibility of rostered ministry as part of your plans. If you're not sure where to start, invite the rostered leader in your ministry context to talk with you about how and when they first learned about the various forms of rostered ministry in the church. As you reflect on her or his experience, look for ways you can begin such conversations with young adults in your context.

### **13. Do the rostered leaders in your congregation regularly tell their call stories?**

**Background:** Few things have greater impact on young adults who ponder their own sense of call than that of hearing or reading the call stories of others. Those who have already experienced their own sense of call to rostered ministry sometimes feel their story is so particular to them that it may not be of help to a wider audience of people. Not true! Every call story can connect with someone, and some aspects of any call story can connect with everyone. The Bible is filled with call stories which can inspire us. Our church is filled with the call stories of rostered leaders which can inspire us as well.

#### **Becoming a Connector:**

A. (Yes) Even if rostered leaders in your ministry context remain constant over time, the audience listening to their call stories will change over time. Make sure the rostered leaders in your context continue to regularly tell their call stories time and again. Consider making your rostered leaders' call stories a standing part of your bulletin, newsletter or website. If rostered leaders from outside your ministry context visit, perhaps as supply pastors, invite them to tell their call stories as a part of their self-introduction to your community.

B. (Sort of) Some lectionary texts read publicly at Sunday morning worship lend themselves readily to a rostered leader including her or his call story as a part of the sermon. This can limit the frequency and setting for telling call stories. Be creative! Look for other times and places in which a rostered leader can tell the story of call, for example: on the occasion of a congregation's anniversary; when marking high school or college graduations; while on break at a community service project; in the midst of Bible

study; at a Theology at the Pub session with young adults in your community (to name but a few).

C. (No) Ask your rostered leaders to tell you their call stories in conjunction with your completion of this self-assessment. Reflect on the stories together and discuss how you can see the value in sharing these stories with young adults and others in your ministry context. Look at the lectionary texts for the next few months. Do any of them lend themselves to your rostered leaders incorporating their own call stories in proclamation? Encourage them to do so!

#### **14. Do lay leaders in your ministry tell their call stories?**

**Background:** As noted in the background of the previous question, hearing or reading the call stories of others can have a tremendous impact on young adults pondering their own sense of call. While this is certainly true when it comes to the call stories of rostered leaders, it is equally true for the call stories of non-rostered lay leaders in the church. While we may hope that all Christians feel they are living out their baptismal calling to be disciples of Jesus Christ in their work life, there are certainly some who do so with passion. Invite them to tell their call stories in your ministry context. No matter the occupation, having lay leaders tell how they see themselves as answering God's call in their occupations and ministry in daily life will help young adults broaden their own understanding of call.

#### **Becoming a Connector:**

A. (Yes) Make sure you keep expanding the number of lay leaders who tell their call stories. Doing so will ensure a wide variety of occupations, jobs and people are represented in the story telling. Invite those lay leaders in your congregation who are able to clearly articulate their call story to volunteer to serve as leaders for synodical or Project Connect-sponsored discernment retreats.

B. (Sort of) Look at the ways in which you currently have lay leaders tell their call stories in your ministry context and find ways to expand the number of occasions when and places where this happens. Consider inviting several lay leaders to tell their call stories in the context of worship, having a rostered leader create a larger story, tying the pieces together in light of God's story of calling us in connection with the lectionary texts for the day.

C. (No) Invite a lay leader from another ministry context to come share his or her call story with the people in your context. Sometimes all it takes is for one person with a clear and compelling sense of God's call in their life to help inspire others to see God's call in theirs. Your synod office or the Project Connect leadership team can help connect you with such lay leaders who have a call story to tell.

#### **15. In the past seven years has a young adult from your congregation attended seminary?**

**Background:** It is important to emphasize that it is not necessary for young adults to go to seminary in order to grow in faith and relationship with Christ and one another. Indeed, young adults can serve and grow in many different ways. However, whether a congregation has young adults recently attending seminary is one indicator of how effectively they are helping young adults discern where God is calling them to serve in the world.

**Becoming a Connector:**

A. (Yes) Since young adults from your congregation have attended seminary in recent years, is there a specific process or mechanism in place to facilitate conversations that encourage discernment about whether seminary might be something a young adult is called to? Who initiates these conversations? How do you identify individuals who might be candidates to attend seminary?

B. (Sort of) If you answered “sort of” you may not know for sure. It would be helpful to find resources that equip your congregation to more effectively and regularly encourage young adults to consider the way in which God is calling them to serve in the world.

C. (No) Experience has demonstrated that as congregations get stronger in ministering to and with young adults, there is a better chance that some young adults will sense a call to public ministry and go to seminary. Your congregation might, on the other hand, already be doing a good job at building faith relationships between young adults and God. If you feel good about the number of young adults involved in the life of your congregation and the depth of their involvement, and there has been, at the same time, an absence of young adults feeling called to public ministry, it might be because there is a need for building more awareness of seminary learning and rostered leadership.

**16. Does your website attract young adults to your ministry?**

**Background:** Most young adults will never use a phone book to find the number of a friend, business, or even a church. The Internet has completely changed the way young adults locate information. When looking for a church in their area, they are most likely to turn to the Internet. Having a website is (at least) an initial indicator the congregation speaks the language of young adults. If that website includes pictures, videos, music, and tools that engage young adults and has a layout appealing to young adults, they will visit the website and hopefully the church. Websites also give an opportunity to do what phone books never could, namely, to provide a format for congregations to showcase their church and ministries. They also become tools for mission, expanding the ministry of the church into the daily lives of guests and members.

**Becoming a Connector:**

A. (Yes) Great work! Your website is connecting people to your congregation and hopefully also drawing people into your ministry and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Don't forget to keep your website current. Websites with old information are not worth visiting. Also, remember that new website tools are constantly being developed to continue reaching out to new groups of people, especially young adults. Be creative in using

your website to its fullest potential. Is there a way to create a network of young adults through your website? Is there a way to set up a forum for young adults?

B. (Sort of) Maybe you have a website but it's not inviting to young adults. For young adults, websites must be more than just repositories of information. They must be engaging and give people something to interact with. Gather some young adults together to find out what's needed on your website to draw them to it on a regular basis. Have them work with someone who is able to redesign the website to appeal to younger adults.

C. (No) Either you do not have a website or it does not draw young adults. As with B above, gather young adults together to talk about which websites they visit regularly. Why do they visit them? What do they get from them? What would make young adults want to visit your website? Solicit their help to design your website so it functions to welcome young adults into the ministry of your church.

## **17. Does your congregation utilize social networking websites and social media?**

**Background:** Websites are essentially one-way means of communication. If someone is looking for you, they can search and find you on your website. Social networking websites create communities of people, and allow for multi-directional communication. Not only can people find you if they are looking, but you are also able to communicate with them. You can create networks of people who share common interests. For young adults who are very relational, social networking sites give them an online community that is centered around their interests.

### **Becoming a Connector:**

A. (Yes) You are on the cutting edge of using technology to reach young adults. Continue to look for new ways to use these sites to draw young people into your online community. Do you find ways to connect with the friends who are in your online social network? Are you posting items on their walls that might interest their friends?

B. (Sort of) Perhaps your congregation is part of Facebook, and you use it for information or basic communication. Consider talking with young adults about how you might use it to create an online community. Creative videos, pictures, etc. might create opportunities for young adults to enter into discussions on your social network page. Your page needs to be more than just your congregation reaching out or others going to it to find information. It must do both: it must promote two-way interaction with young adults.

C. (No) Amazingly, email and websites are now considered old technology among young adults. Most successful organizations have discovered the value of having social networking tools as ways to interact with and draw in young adults. Young adults can help you see the value and effectiveness of these tools.