

Young Adult Working Group (YAWG) Proposal for a 2010 Synod Theme

The Year of the Young Adult It's Sunday: Do you know where your young adult children are?

Mission Statement:

To increase the synod's rostered and lay members' awareness of young adults' social and spiritual habits and hopes.

Problem Statement:

The Metropolitan Washington DC area is the hottest, hippest destination for 18-29 year old professionals to live and work according to a September 30, 2009 article in *The Wall Street Journal*.ⁱ 26% of adults in Washington DC are 18-29 years old, and the Metropolitan Washington DC area has one of the highest concentrations of young adults in the entire country.ⁱⁱ Yet, Metro DC ELCA congregations have not typically connected with this growing demographic in our own communities. The median age of an ELCA member is 54 compared with the Washington DC median age of 36.ⁱⁱⁱ According to conversations with Metro DC pastors, not one Metro DC congregation is composed of at least 25% of this age demographic in its membership nor does any congregation have even 10% of this demographic in its worshipping community. What's more, the ELCA's Research and Evaluation department contends that only 15% of Metro DC congregations are growing with any age demographic.^{iv}

These statistics may sound like a bit of bad news, but they simply outline what we in Metro DC congregations already know is a problem. We know that our children and grandchildren have not connected with the Church. Many ELCA members identify with a comment made recently by Presiding Bishop Hanson about his children. At the 2009 Churchwide Assembly Bishop Mark Hanson, met with rostered leaders under 32 years old, and these young leaders asked him: "What are your hopes for our ministries?" He responded to them by saying: "My children don't connect with our Church. Lead congregations that my young adult children would want to be a part of."

Purpose of the plan:

We want to work with congregations to help them become places of which young adults would like to be a part. And the Metro DC Synod in a unique position: Metro DC congregations are located in communities filled with 18-35 year old young adults. What's more, our synod has called a staff person who dedicates fifty percent of her time to ministry with and for this age group. This current synodical configuration presents Metro DC congregation members and leaders with an opportunity to learn more about young adults and to think strategically about how they not only connect with young adults but also how their congregations can become communities of faith of which their grown children would want to be a part.

In the year 2010, the synod's YAWG will raise awareness about young adult ministry across the entire synod through conferences, one-on-one meetings with area congregations, and covenant groups of lay people. In addition, YAWG hopes that at least five congregations will commit to actively working on becoming the kinds of congregations that our children want to be part of.

The Plan:

Part 1: 2010 Synod Event Speakers

Synod Event	Possible Speakers
January: Together in Mission	Carol Howard Merritt , Author of <i>Tribal Church: Ministering to the Missing Generation</i> and <i>Reframing Hope : Vital Ministry in a New Generation</i>
April: Bishop's Convocation	Chris Nelson , Senior Pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, the founding congregation of <i>Spirit Garage</i> and <i>Jacob's Well</i>
May: Synod Assembly I	Bishop Mark Hanson , Presiding Bishop and author of the sentence: "Lead a church my kids will want to go to" Kristen Glass , Director of ELCA Young Adult Ministries
July: Synod Council	Martha Grace Reese , Author of <i>Unbinding the Gospel</i>
September: Synod Assembly II	Brian McLaren , author of various books including <i>Everything Must Change</i>
November: Young Adult Conference	Rob Bell , Pastor of Mars Hill Church, Grand Rapids, MI and author of numerous books including <i>Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith</i>
Monthly Conference Meetings	Arrange for two speakers to speak to conferences over the course of the year: Diana Butler Bass Karen Ward (by teleconference)

Part 2: Build at least one Covenant Group of (up to ten) people interested in supporting this ministry in the synod and doing this ministry in their congregations. They will support this ministry by:

- Praying for this ministry and engaging in spiritual direction as a group
- Meeting and consulting with YAWG on the progress of young adult ministries in their congregations and/or the beginning of a new congregation
- Holding one another accountable for work on this ministry
- Setting goals for this ministry in their congregations and/or new congregation
- Championing this ministry in the synod and serving as a resource for other people who want to begin similar ministries in their congregations

Part 3: Meet together with the senior pastor and at least one lay leader in at least forty congregations:

YAWG members will meet with the senior pastor and at least one lay leader to:

- Listen and learn about them and their ministries
- Ensure they have been informed about the synod's 2010 theme
- Listen to their hopes, frustrations and needs as they relate to connecting with young adults
- Inform them about this initiative and the future plans of YAWG
- Possibly unearth pastors/rostered leaders' interest in this ministry or questions about it
- Connect them with a covenant group of rostered leaders (if enough are interested)
- Ask for ways they would be willing to support this ministry in their congregation and/or the synod

- Receive names of congregations' young adults interested in young adult ministry (if their congregations do not already offer it)

Part 4: A New Congregation

YAWG will work toward starting a new congregation for all people at a time and in a location that would be welcoming to young adults

Part 5: 5 New Young Adult Ministries by the end of 2010

YAWG will identify at least five congregations which are willing to work toward including the following opportunities in a way and at a time which would be welcoming to young adults:

- Fellowship
- Service
- Discussion/Study/Prayer
- Non-Sunday Morning Worship Service
- Congregational Leadership (at least one young adult on every committee and at least two young adults on congregation councils composed of 12 or more members)

Part 6: Evaluation

- YAWG will evaluate this plan at its monthly meetings
- The synod council will review this plan and offer its input at least three times in 2010

How to Get Started in Your Congregation Today!

- Form a congregation YAWG with at least ½ of its members ages 18-35 (no children). (There is at least one already operating in the synod, and they would be happy to consult with you).
- Find others in your congregation interested in this ministry and invite someone from YAWG to meet with you
- Tell your pastor you are interested and would like to meet with YAWG
- Gather groups of people to attend the 2010 synod themed events found in Part 1
- Find at least five young adults (18-35, no kids) who want to start a young adult fellowship group in your congregation. (There are some in the synod who would be happy to consult with you).
- When you have some kind of young adult ministry, put it on your website home page!
- Meet with at least five 18-35 year olds in your community who are not related to you and ask them the following questions: 1) Do you go to church? If so, why? If not, why not? 2) What do you think of Jesus? 3) What would it take for the Church to "get you back"? Then, don't contradict, convict or refute; just LISTEN!

ⁱ <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703787204574442912720525316.html>

ⁱⁱ http://www.wmv.org/assets/2009/10/19/unmarried_america_and_the_rae_lake_research_slides_for_website.pdf.

p. 5

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.wdcep.com/retail/retdem.php>. Other median ages include: Fairfax county: 39 (<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/demogrph/gendemo.htm>); Arlington county: 34

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arlington_County,_Virginia); Montgomery county: 37 (http://www.city-data.com/county/Montgomery_County-MD.html); Prince Georges county: 33 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince_George's_County,_Maryland)
^{iv} <https://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Research-and-Evaluation/Synod-Statistics.aspx#8G>