

Young Adults Do Not Have to be a Lost Cause in Our Churches

by Wanda Kidd, Collegiate Engagement Coordinator

A concern for churches and parents is that their grown children are not continuing the church attendance that was a significant part of their childhood. It has long been accepted that many young people will take a hiatus from church during their late adolescence and young adulthood. There was also the assumption that when they were in their mid-twenties they would marry, have children, and return to church. My mom told of being a newlywed and living away from their hometown. They found themselves out of the habit of going to church unless they were visiting home. She said that after about six months of that trend, my grandfather came to visit and took my dad outside and told him it was time for him to get his family back in church. The next Sunday, they were in church.



We no longer live in a culture where many parents have that type of sway over their children and there are many reasons for that. Mostly, we raised our children to have a voice in what they wanted to participate in and where they wanted to invest their time and talents. There are many good aspects to giving our children that type of input and power, but the results of that parenting model is that they continue those trajectories as they mature. That means they do not suddenly step back into line and follow the same path that we did as young adults. As frustrating as that can be, it seems to me that we should not be surprised, but we can be creative.

THERE A FEW THINGS THAT WE MUST UNDERSTAND ABOUT HOW YOUNG ADULTS PROCESS INFORMATION:

They hate conflict.

They need to know that they are valued.

They want to be able to look at things virtually before they will walk into a church building.

They need to know that someone there is anticipating their presence.

They want to know that not only are they welcomed there, but their friends would be welcomed as well.

Obligation is NOT a motivator.

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS ABOUT HOW TO KEEP YOUR YOUNG ADULT CHILDREN IN CHURCH:

- **Be excited about church yourself.** If all they hear about church are complaints and frustrations, there is little reason for them to be drawn into a place of disharmony, just because it is where they grew up.
- **Read some of the young Christian writers that young adults are talking about.** Ask them who they are reading and what they are thinking and then follow-up.
- **In church, ask other parents about their children and then tell your children that Mrs. or Mr. Blank asked about them.** If we continue to connect them to the people within the church, they will be more prone to want to return.
- **Talk to them about faith issues when they are young and, as they age, talk to them about deeper issues.** Share with them your viewpoint and why you believe that.
- **Find out where all of the college age students from your church are attending school.** When church members go to those cities, have them invite a couple of the students to a meal. Talk to the parents about your plans so that they can make the connection and then follow-up personally.