

FROM INSPIRING YOUTH MINISTRY TO ENGAGING ADULT DISCIPLESHIP:

How Healthy Ministries Cultivate Lifelong Faith

2026 APCE Annual Event Workshop

Jenna Campbell (jennacampbell28@gmail.com) and Eric Varnon (ericvarnon@gmail.com)

Use this worksheet on your own or in conversation with others in your context to consider potential unhealthy habits in your youth and adult ministries and identify effective strategies for engaging ministries with youth and emerging adults.

AN OPENING ACTIVITY

Using two different colored sticky notes:

- On one color of sticky note, invite people to add a word or phrase per sticky note that describes youth ministry. What do you think of when you think of youth ministry?
- On another color of sticky note, invite people to add a word or phrase per sticky note that describes adult ministry. What do you think of when you think of adult ministry?
- Collect the sticky notes and put them up on the wall, with the youth ministry sticky notes at one end and the adult ministry sticky notes on the other.
- Review the responses, noting the similarities and differences among youth ministry and adult ministry.
- Discuss: what would happen if we viewed this more as a spectrum?
 - What descriptions of adult ministry can also inform and be true for youth ministry? Move those descriptions more toward the middle. *For example, youth are craving deep conversations on serious topics. That's not something that's limited to adult ministry.*
 - What descriptions of youth ministry can also inform and be true for adult ministry? Move those descriptions more toward the middle. *For example, creativity and movement are not limited to youth ministry. Many adults yearn to learn in ways beyond lecture.*

Share 1-2 things about your youth ministry and/or adult ministry that you find inspiring or engaging.

Think about transitional times from adolescence to young adulthood -

- If you personally were a part of the church as a youth, think back to when you were a youth. What was your transition like from a youth to an adult in the church? From youth ministry to young adult ministry or into the general life of the church?
- If you weren't part of the church as a youth, think about other institutional transitions around that age...your transition from high school to college, moving from part time job to full time job. What was that experience like?

What are some ways your ministry context facilitates the transition into adulthood? What are some gaps you see in your context that could be addressed?

CONSIDER UNHEALTHY HABITS IN YOUTH AND ADULT MINISTRIES

Name 1-2 *youth ministry practices* in your context that might be creating unhealthy habits for lifelong discipleship.

Name 1-2 *adult ministry practices* in your context that might be creating barriers for welcoming and including emerging adults into the life of the church.

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR YOUTH MINISTRY PROGRAMS THAT ENGAGE YOUTH IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

Consider the following strategies for healthy youth ministry that engage youth in the life of the church and encourage lifelong discipleship. Identify 2-3 strategies to focus on that would make the most difference for your youth and congregation.

- Intentionally Intergenerational - cultivating relationships among the generations
- Keychain Leadership - empowering youth through meaningful leadership opportunities
- Connect Faith to Life - following Jesus calls us to a new way of living
- Make Space for Doubt - welcoming wonder and wrestling with questions

What is your congregation doing now that engages youth in the life of the church and prepares them for a life of faith beyond high school?

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING ADULT MINISTRIES MORE CREATIVELY

Consider the following strategies that engage young adults in the life of the church. Which strategies would make the most difference for your congregation?

- Listen in Order to Care & Care Creatively - pastoral care only happens when we know what is happening in people's lives
- Being Intentionally Invitational - giving opportunities for voice and decision making in the critical, visible parts of a congregation's programs, ministry, and missions
- Prioritize Fellowship & Play - creating space for relationships creates space for faith-growth
- Identity Finding - walk alongside people finding who they are through mentoring, friendships, purpose finding, and equipping

What is your congregation doing now that welcomes young adults into adult ministry and the life of the church?

EQUIPPING EMERGING ADULTS TO FIND FAITH COMMUNITIES IN YOUNG ADULTHOOD

How can we best equip our youth to go out into the world to continue their faith journey?

How can we as a congregation continue to support emerging adults through their transition into young adulthood?

What are the next steps we can take as a congregation that would move us toward equipping emerging adults for lifelong discipleship?