

For information & discussion by LC from Pastoral Ministry Team

Our Pastoral Ministry Team, the end of last week, had a frank discussion, stemming from the observations, requests, expressed needs and deep concerns from . sessions, Search committees, leaders, pastors, conversations over the past several years and heightened with and around the Whitworth Fellows ministering in our presbytery and congregations, camping ministry,ō

that UNLESS we integrate into our priorities of disciple-making and spiritual formation and spiritual gifts emphasis, intentional focusing on and equipping our congregations and leaders in what current emerging research is referring to as the practices and ways of %Growing Young+ based on current practices and trends, *many of our congregations will seriously dwindle to questionable viability or no longer be in existence in 10 – 15 years.*

But the Christ's call and mission and the needs and spiritual hungers and opportunities in our Montana communities have **not** disappeared.

PMT,
discussing options before it and the presbytery us,
the FINAL round of DREAM grants with imminent deadline we just learned of as it was sent out the end of August,
the opportunity to apply for another year or 2 of Whitworth grants for Ministry Fellows again and the comprehensive training materials for congregations and governing bodies on Growing Young based on the most recent research

The PMT voted to support (in principle until grant application completed) Yellowstone's application for a new DREAM grant expanding upon our earlier one with intentional focusing on and equipping our congregations and leaders in what current emerging research is referring to as the practices and ways of %Growing Young+

And integrating Whitworth Fellows as a part of this work in Yellowstone Presbytery.

The input of LC is needed as well

Based on groundbreaking research that involved over 250 congregations, ***Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church***, September 20, 2016) profiles innovative churches that are engaging 15- to 29- year-olds. These churchesō reflecting the denominational spectrum, varying in size, and located all over the countryō are growing spiritually, emotionally, missionally, and numerically.

Authors Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin show that reaching young people doesn't boil down to hyper-entertaining programs, trendy locations, or other attractions. What matter most are relationships, empathy, community, and living Jesus. ōThanks to these remarkable congregations, tens of thousands of young people can't stop talking about how ~~known~~they feel in their church and how, no matter what happens, their church feels like ~~home~~,ō the authors say. As one young churchgoer puts it: ōOur whole church treats us like we are the church of today, not just the church of the future.ō

The authors outline six strategies essential to engaging young people:

- **Unlock Keychain Leadership:** Keychain leaders entrust others with access and authority, and empower all generations including teens and emerging adults with their own metaphorical ōset of keysō to help influence and shape the direction of the church.
- **Empathize with Today's Young People:** This means ōfeeling with young peopleō as they grapple with existential questions of identity, belonging, and purpose; as they

- experience “*systemic abandonment*” due to divorce and the self-absorbed adults around them; and as they act out a desire for connection through social media.
- **Take Jesus’ Message Seriously, :** The authors were struck by how, in the churches studied, they called for commitment and set the bar high. “Jesus reigns over poor theology and his words ring true for young sojourners hungry for life-giving direction.” One young interviewee said, “The goal for our church is not really effectiveness with young people, but serving and following Jesus.”
 - **Fuel a Warm Community:** “Warm is the new cool” in these congregations, where authenticity triumphs over worship style or a multitude of programs. Young people who participated in the research praised their churches for “warm” attributes, such as welcoming, belonging, accepting, hospitable, and caring.
 - **Prioritize Young People (and Families) Everywhere:** Churches in the study revealed a disproportionate prioritization of young people— an impulse that, rather than excluding older generations, breathed life into the entire congregation. As one pastor put it, “Everyone rises when you focus on young people.” Involving young people in every ministry has allowed these churches to thrive with authenticity and intergenerational relationships.
 - **Be the Best Neighbors:** The authors found that in churches growing young, the community accepts the difficult task of offering young people a thoughtful path to neighboring well. They provide opportunities for teens and emerging adults to serve others, pursue social justice, find their calling, interact with popular culture, and respond to heated cultural issues.

The Dream grant information was sent to us the end of August (when we were away) and our Synod has set a date of Oct 4 for applications.

DREAM - The Developmental, Risky, Experimental, Adaptive Mission (DREAM) Grant is being offered by the Presbyterian Mission Agency in order to encourage dreamers, risk-takers, pioneers and trailblazers. We need such people who are not afraid to fail and church cultures that will encourage people to risk failure in order to find new ways to succeed. We are seeking to find persons and ways to invigorate the Church anew.

We fit several of the areas they require:

- Rural, remote, or urban churches that are establishing ministries that will enable them to better accomplish mission in an appropriate context;
- Ministries that are charged with reaching, loving and teaching college age or young adults so that they may be lifelong followers of Jesus Christ;
- Emerging leadership models for mid councils that create safe space for innovation.