



# Young Adults

## 18-35s and the Church

### Introduction

In recent years it has become increasingly apparent that there are fewer and fewer 18-35 year olds attending our family of Baptist churches in the U.K. We are not alone. Reporting from other mainstream denominations would suggest that this is a 'missing generation' in churches across the nation. Whilst there are plenty of stories that would appear to buck this trend, statistical evidence would suggest that church attendance by those in this age range has seen a startling and accelerating reduction over the last 40 years.<sup>1</sup>

The challenge of reaching those in this generation with the gospel of Christ has been the subject of repeated discussion by the Baptists Together national Mission Forum. Additionally, it has been noted that many of those who have grown up in our Baptist family of churches often find spiritual homes within other denominations as they grow in to young adults. A Kingdom viewpoint rejoices that these younger adults are continuing to grow in faith, no matter what church they attend! Denominational loyalty is hardly a priority for this age group and it is not, in and of itself, an objective desired by the Mission Forum. However, the question remains why those with heritage in Baptist churches so commonly find places of discipleship and service within other groups of churches as younger adults.

In June 2018, the Mission Forum commissioned a piece of research to draw on the experience of practitioners from across the U.K. who are actively engaging with, empowering and releasing 18-35 year olds in the mission of God. A gathering of practitioners took place in December 2018 and this report seeks to present the resulting outcomes and recommendations.

<sup>1</sup> See Peter Brierley, UK Church Statistics 3, 2018 Ed. Section 16.3 - *The Aging Church*

# Young Adults

## 18-35s and the Church

*This report will divide in to the sections outlined below. It will be presented to the Baptists Together national Mission Forum in June 2019 for their consideration and further action. The report author submits the following with the approval of those who participated in the practitioners' gathering in December 2018. It is our collective desire that this offering might result in initiatives amongst our family of churches that seek to greater engage with, empower and release 18-35 year old's in the mission of God.*

- 01 Definitions & methodology.
- 02 Themes & characteristics.
- 03 Recommendations
- 04 Appendices

### Definitions & methodology

Terminology can be misleading and potentially unhelpful. This section will seek to define the subject group that are the focus of this report as clearly as possible. The methodology used during the practitioners' gathering will also be described.

### Themes & characteristics

A number of themes and characteristics of 18-35 year olds were identified by the group of practitioners. These will be listed with a brief explanation in this section.

### Recommendations

Having listened to each other and discerned together how God's Spirit might be leading us as a national family of churches, the practitioners made a number of recommendations to be considered by the Mission Forum and the wider Baptist family. Three recommendations have been prioritised as those which received greatest consensus but all will be recorded in this section, each having been validated through discussion together.

### Appendices

Appendices will be referenced throughout the report and will be listed numerically in ascending order.

# 01 Definitions & methodology

## Definitions

Terminology has proven somewhat controversial in defining this group of people. As with all socio-demographic categories, there is no 'typical' Millennial as there is no typical 'Baby Boomer' or 'Gen X-er'. There is even disparity in identifying an age range for this group.

For the purposes of this report, Millennials (also known as Generation Y) will be considered as the generation that entered adulthood during the first decade of the millennium<sup>1</sup> (born 1982-1992 and aged 26-36 at the time of writing this report). Those born in the following decade (1993 – mid 2000s) will be considered as belonging to Generation Z. Some researchers further divide these demographic categories into smaller subgroups but this has little meaningful bearing on this report.

The focus, therefore, of this report is 18-35 year olds who 'bridge' these two demographic groupings and who will be referred to here as 'Young Adults' with the following caveats:

- a growing body of research suggests that 'adulthood' is increasingly delayed beyond the age of 18 in Western contemporary society. Other research points to a growing number of those in their early to mid-teens who have assumed adult roles and responsibilities. We will do well to be aware of the implications of this thinking when considering how we choose to find language to define this group,
- a 'generosity' of definition will prove helpful such that the term 'Young Adults' is best viewed with consideration given to those slightly younger and slightly older than strictly 18-35 years old.

## Methodology & Objectives

The observations and recommendations made in this report are based on the combined wisdom of practitioners from around our Union of churches and Associations who have experience working with, supporting, training and releasing Young Adults in missional ministry. Each of the Associations within Baptists Together were asked to nominate those with relevant experience so they could be invited to a 24 hour 'work-group' gathering. Additionally, an invitation was extended to BMS World Mission to send representatives, and to Phil Knox, Head of Mission to Young Adults for the Evangelical Alliance.

Sixteen people attended the gathering which took place on 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> December 2018 at IMC in Selly Oak.<sup>2</sup>

The aims of this gathering were:

- To hear each other's stories about how we have engaged with young adults, supported/trained/released them in to missional ministry.
- To record those stories noting any particular elements/themes that might be common to all.
- To consider what, if anything, God might be saying to us about how we should develop this area of our lives together as a national family of churches.
- All of the above to be conducted with an openness to the Spirit of God speaking and leading our conversations.

The gathering was Chaired by Carl Smethurst (Regional Minister, Mission – South West Baptist Association). Presentations were recorded and the main points summarised before further discussion attempted to identify key elements/themes that were common to the experiences of most, if not all, of the practitioners present. In the light of these discussions, the concluding session of the gathering aimed to discern together what God might be saying to our family of churches with regard to engaging with, empowering and releasing Young Adults in missional ministry, and to offer considered recommendations for further discussion and implementation by Baptists Together as represented by national Specialist Teams, Associations, Colleges and local churches.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Source: 'Millennials', House of Commons Briefing Paper Source: 'Millennials', House of Commons Briefing Paper – April 2017

<sup>2</sup> Participants names and the Association/Organisation they represented can be found in Appendix 1

<sup>3</sup> The programme for this gathering can be found in Appendix 2

## 02 Themes & Characteristics

Each practitioner gave a 20 minute presentation with the following aims;

1. share how you are engaging with/empowering/releasing Young Adults for mission in your context
2. identify key features/themes/factors that they have found to be important in doing so.

A summary of the salient points expressed in each presentation can be read in Appendix 3.

Whilst it was apparent that practitioners worked across a range of settings from the local church to mission agencies to specific charitable projects, there were a number of discernable themes that were present in many of the presentations. Further discussion as a group identified the following common themes as present in the majority of examples of engaging with, empowering and releasing younger adults for mission.

### 1. Effective Mentoring

There was broad acknowledgment that releasing this generation for God's mission is indivisible from effective discipleship. The most effective form of discipleship for younger adults was identified as mentoring. There was recognition that mentoring is costly in terms of time but that it is of significant enough importance to make that investment a priority. Mentoring took different forms in different contexts with some finding small group mentoring to work well (the 'Huddle'), others suggesting 'spiritual parenting' / mentoring by older generations was of key importance, and still others highlighting the effectiveness of peer mentoring amongst contemporaries. That effective mentoring was a key theme, though, in releasing this generation for God's mission was broadly agreed by the group. As one practitioner eloquently put it, "This generation don't want a 'sage on the stage', they're looking for a 'guide by their side'!"

### 2. Creating Authentic Community

Nearly all the presentations strongly suggested that creating an authentic community was a significant key to releasing young adults for God's mission. Several practitioners pointed out the desire of younger generations for community in an increasingly digital/virtual world. However, desirable community has to be that which exhibits movement and engagement in a cause; less of a 'social club' and more of a 'team on a mission'. This generation is tired of communities whose rhetoric does not clearly manifest itself in its actions. There is an increasing sensitivity amongst this generation to advertising which promises much but delivers little. One practitioner quoted a young adult as saying, "Having been advertised to our whole lives, we millennials have highly sensitive BS meters, and we're not easily impressed with consumerism or performances." Authenticity in our church communities cannot be underestimated in its importance. Other comments highlighted the importance of inclusivity in community for young adults with specific reference made to gender balance in leadership and to hospitality and welcome for all regardless of ethnicity, sexuality, educational background or socio-economic status.

### 3. Appointing Young Adults to Leadership Roles

Most practitioners highlighted the importance of not just preparing younger adults for leadership but actually letting them lead! In discussion, one contributor referred to the frustrating 'now, but not yet' of Christian leadership that young adults sometimes experience; lots of preparation for leadership 'now' but 'not yet' being given the opportunity to lead. Those present affirmed the importance of appointing young adults to leadership roles and how making this a 'cultural norm' means there are clear pathways to leadership open to younger people in our churches/organisations. Some comments expressed the importance of creating 'safe' structures for younger adults to lead within, with those around them who 'have their backs'. Dr. Ruth Perrin cites "aborted leadership development" as one of the causes which leads to Millennials becoming disenchanted with the church and ultimately becoming de-churched.<sup>4</sup> Appointing young adults to leadership roles, then, is a key theme in releasing this generation for God's mission but it must be done in a considered and responsible way.

---

<sup>4</sup> Ruth Perrin, 'How Faith Changes: experiences of Emerging Adult Christianity in NE England', Durham University, 2018 p28-29

#### **4. Encouraging Creativity and Self-Expression**

Most of the contexts presented recognised the importance of permission-giving to younger adults to express themselves creatively in all areas in the life of the church/organisation, but especially in mission. Several practitioners spoke of the importance of individuals or small groups of young adults finding creative ways to engage with those to whom they are best placed to relate the gospel. Whilst this could be claimed to be true for all Christians of every generation, the particular point was made that rather than training young adults in ‘how to’ evangelism methods as might have been the case in the recent history of the evangelical church, encouraging them to find creative and possibly new ways to engage their peers in the gospel story instead was a more effective way to release them in God’s mission. One practitioner spoke of the importance of “making mission fun” citing social action and social entrepreneurship as examples of how young adults could engage in mission in ways that also reflect their passions and release their gifting.

#### **5. Creating Leadership Pathways**

Of significant note was the number of instances where practitioners have successfully accessed Internship or Apprenticeship programmes to empower and release young adults in God’s mission. Some specific examples of internship programmes mentioned were FORM (<https://www.form-uk.org/>), NWBA Disciple and BMS World Mission Action Teams. Research suggests that a high proportion of those who have completed Internship programmes continue in a leadership role in the Church. This is particularly demonstrable from research conducted amongst those who have completed the BMS Action Team programme. However, there is less compelling evidence that these leaders find roles within the Baptist family and this was generally borne out in the experience of the practitioners present. Indeed, some pointed to successful programmes run by other church networks such as New Frontiers and HTB that young adults in Baptist churches were being encouraged to enroll on and which inevitably led them into leadership positions outside of the Baptist family. There was broad agreement amongst practitioners that a Kingdom viewpoint rejoices that these younger adults are continuing to grow in faith, no matter what family of churches they become leaders in. However, some regret was expressed that there are very few options open to this generation in Baptist churches of Internship programmes that might lead to them exercising their leadership gifts within our family of churches in the longer term, especially when other networks of churches appear to provide more open and obvious leadership pathways to follow.

## 03 Recommendations

Having listened to each other and discerned together how God's Spirit might be leading us as a national family of churches, the practitioners made a number of recommendations to be considered by the Mission Forum and the wider Baptist family. The following three recommendations have been prioritised as those which received greatest consensus but all will be recorded in this section, each having been validated through discussion together. Recognising that some of the following suggestions might require a 'development phase' whilst others have the potential to be 'quick wins', the strong desire of the practitioner group was that these recommendations do manifest themselves in the life of our family of churches. Some present had been part of similar consultations previously but report seeing very little evidence of recommendations being taken forward. With this in mind, the report author has made some tentative suggestions as to how each of these recommendations might be actioned moving forwards, at least to provide stimulus as a discussion starter.

### 1. Create leadership pathways for Young Adults within our family of churches.

#### *Internships/Apprenticeships*

There was a broad consensus that as a Baptist family we should be able to offer opportunities for short-medium term immersive experiences for young adults in missional contexts. There was recognition of various internship/apprenticeship schemes in individual local Baptist churches, particularly those that are larger in size. What seemed to be lacking was a national internship/apprenticeship scheme that coupled missional opportunity with training which reflected a Baptist identity. Several in the practitioners group spoke of young adults in their churches who had participated in various schemes overseen by other denominations or church networks. Those young adults are predominantly now leading in other church streams rather than within the Baptist family. The group maintained a Kingdom view which celebrates God at work in and through the whole of his family whilst acknowledging that young adults in leadership roles will likely lead to an increase in young adults within our own family of churches.

*Action* – In its Action Teams, BMS World Mission already has a developed and successful programme for short term immersive experiences for young adults in missional contexts. In recent years, BMS has extended this programme to a U.K context (as yet just in Wales) alongside a short overseas mission trip.

- Might Baptists Together work alongside BMS to further develop Action Teams across the U.K.?
- Might there be opportunity to extend Action Teams to an optional Year 2 and maybe a Year 3 apprenticeship scheme?
- What additional training/resources would be required to do so?
- Might some of the training resources being developed by Spurgeon's College in collaboration with BMS provide a structure for such an apprenticeship scheme? Or would this need to be 'bespoke'?
- Could Baptists Together (Mission Forum?) commit budget to the development, promotion and ongoing oversight of such a scheme?

#### *Leadership mentoring from local church, regional and national leaders*

This recommendation was seen to 'dovetail' with a successful apprenticeship scheme but was also suggested as a distinct key factor in developing and releasing young leaders for God's mission in its own right. It was noted that although some Baptist churches are extremely strong in this area, it is not the norm for mentoring to be modelled within our family of churches. The group felt this needed to be addressed urgently if we were to encourage young adults in authentic discipleship and release leadership gifting in them. Examples were given of successful mentoring of young adults at local church but also regional and national levels. This gave opportunity and visible profile to young adults in all these spheres which encouraged greater engagement of others of the same generation in a movement where leadership for young adults wasn't just spoken about but actively modelled and promoted.



*Action* – The success of any Internship/Apprenticeship scheme is dependent on excellent local mentoring and part of finding suitable placements for interns/apprentices would involve identifying and training such mentors. However, there is something far bigger and more far-reaching to acknowledge if mentoring is not to be confined to just ‘official’ training programmes. A profound cultural shift is occurring with younger generations seeking out and prizing the ‘guide by my side’ at least as much if not more than the ‘sage on the stage’. To recognise and embrace this shift is key in encouraging young adults to belong, grow spiritually and lead our churches moving forward. But how?

- Might the one-to-one and small group mentoring that is part of our formation processes within our colleges be taught as ‘normative’ for Ministry beyond college?
- What if it became abnormal practice for a Local Church Minister, Pioneer, Youth Specialist, Regional Minister, National Specialist Team Leader, General Secretary, President to *not* be mentoring someone?
- What if the majority of those being mentored were young adults?
- How would our work practices need to change in order for this to happen?
- Would it be worth it?

*Recognise and commend those who have been through these pathways to our family of churches.*

Some discussion revolved around the frustration some young adults feel having completed a training programme (internship/apprenticeship/mentoring scheme) and, having felt called to Ministry and being commended by their local church, then enter a Ministerial Recognition process which, if successful, leads to a further 3-4 years of training. Again, stories were shared of young adults who, faced with this scenario, found leadership roles in churches outside of the Baptist family instead. There was a strong sense that if we create a national leadership pathway for young adults based around an apprenticeship scheme, it ought to be recognised by Baptists Together and those who have successfully completed it commended to our churches. To fail to do so would be a ‘blocked’ or ‘incomplete’ pathway. In a climate where there are insufficient numbers of Ministers available for our national family of churches, creating a nationally recognised, accessible leadership pathway for young adults would not only release a new generation to multiple leadership roles (i.e. evangelists, children’s team leaders, administrators, worship leaders, small group disciple-makers, social action pioneers, missionaries - overseas and UK) but also greater enable the resourcing of our churches with those called and prepared for Ministry in its broadest sense.

*Actions* – The report author firmly believes in the value of both theological study and the preparation of those called to Ministry. He is less convinced of the need to achieve this in the way that is the presently accepted pathway for those called to Ministry in the Baptist family. Our colleges are excellent centres of learning and preparation for those called to nationally recognised, ordained Ministry, conforming to the nationally laid down pathway to achieve this end. There have always been fluctuations in numbers of those being prepared for Baptist Ministry in our colleges. It is for others to analyse the present trends and to ascertain whether they are likely to be temporary or are becoming more persistent. Recognising that this matter goes some considerable distance beyond the scope of this report, the following questions are humbly offered for discussion,

- What if new pathways to nationally recognised, ordained Ministry are created alongside the present one?
- Would colleges then have greater flexibility to create new training approaches that might appeal to a broader constituency – particularly to young adults?
- Might an apprenticeship-based pathway of formation with a more flexible training approach be recognised alongside the present pathway?
- Might those called and commended for Ministerial formation be given a choice of, say, a more academically rigorous pathway (those who will serve our family of churches as nationally recognised Theologians as well as/instead of a local church setting) or a more ‘practical’ pathway with theological reflection and personal spiritual development at the core of the formation processes (but with no academic qualification), alongside the present pathway (somewhere between the two)?
- What challenges would this represent to our present recognition mechanisms?
- What changes would need to be made to those mechanisms to accommodate this approach?
- Would it be worth it?

## 2. Create a national culture/identity for Young Adults within Baptists Together.

Some of the practitioners highlighted how some Christian organisations and denominations have worked hard to create a culture and identity for young adults but that this was not obviously the case for Baptists Together. The Church of England's resource churches were mentioned as an example, BMS World Mission as another who actively seek to employ younger adults in leadership roles, and EA's Head of Mission to Young Adults, Phil Knox, was amongst the practitioners' group present. Various suggestions were made which may help to create a greater culture and identity for young adults within Baptists Together. The following gained the greatest consensus:

- *National Young Adults Champion* – The importance of having young adults in highly visible, national roles was affirmed by several of the practitioners. Equally, it was deemed a worthwhile investment to appoint someone nationally who was both a visionary, inspirational leader and someone who would spearhead young adults networks/activities within Baptists Together.
- *Intentional recruitment of Young Adults to regional/national roles* – The point was made that we appear to have fallen into a pattern of appointing those who are middle aged to nearly all regional and national roles within Baptists Together. It was acknowledged that some of those roles may require people with greater years of experience than young adults are able to offer. Equally, it was pointed out that age does not necessarily bring wisdom. The suggestion was made that all Associations should seek to employ a team member under 35 years old at the earliest opportunity and that young adults should also be included in vision and setting of strategic priorities in Association life. A further point was made that if a BU President under the age of 35 were to be appointed, it would send a highly visible, positive message to young adults and contribute towards a changing culture and identity for this generation within our family of churches.
- *Greater inclusion of young adults in national events* – There was acknowledgement that although further progress would be welcomed, there are positive signs that a greater number of young adults are now actively involved with our national Assembly and Council. However, there were also suggestions that a national gathering specifically aimed at, organised by and led by young adults within the Baptist family would greatly enhance a new sense of identity for this generation within Baptists Together.
- *Create young adults networks* - Several practitioners drew attention to the fact that a high proportion of those who had previously been part of the now defunct BU Young Leaders Forum are still in leadership roles (local, regional and national) within the Baptist family. The investment of time, energy and money in this group would seem to have paid dividends. Setting up similar networks in the future was deemed desirable. It was noted that networks (plural) that reflect the diversity of this age group would be preferable to just a single network.

*Actions* – Some of the suggestions above require a significant financial commitment. Where this would come from and how sustainable it would be will, no doubt, be the source of some discussion. However, I would urge that before the specifics of the financial commitment are discussed, the fundamental question of “Is it worth it?” is considered. Like most new ventures, risk is involved. Some well meaning initiatives will fail, sometimes despite a commitment of time, energy and money. Is the risk worth taking? Is what might be gained by trying more important than what might be lost if we don't try at all? The above recommendations have local, regional and national implications. Those questions will need to be asked in each of these individual forums, but as Baptists Together I would suggest that we have much to gain from engaging each other in conversation, recognising that only with national, regional and local commitment will we stand any chance of creating a culture and identity for Young Adults within our Baptist family.

There might be the possibility of a ‘quick win’ within this recommendation. The proposed change of structure for Baptists Together currently under consultation would encourage a number of national ‘Action Groups’ to be formed, not dissimilar to the present Children, Youth & Families Roundtable. I wonder whether a similar national group might be convened, led by young adults, to consider how some of these recommendations might be further progressed and implemented?



3. **Create a church planting programme within areas where a high proportion of 18-35s live and identify strategic Baptist churches who can be trained and resourced for mission to Young Adults.**

Some discussion reflected on the ways other denominations have sought to engage with and release young adults in missional leadership, both historically and in the present day, by targeting specific locations where a high percentage of young adults are represented in the local population. The degree to which these initiatives have proved successful was the topic of some debate, but there was broad agreement that at very least they had played a significant part in creating a visible culture of welcome and belonging for young adults within those groups of churches. Consideration was given to notable examples of local churches within the Baptist family who are engaging with and releasing young adults in missional leadership. A number of those in the practitioners group have first hand experience of this and their input and insight was invaluable in this conversation.

A two-fold recommendation was made:

- *Identify existing Baptist churches* in areas with a high percentage of young adults in the local population. Offer training and resources as required to enable those churches to engage with and release young adults for missional leadership. Training and ongoing support might be offered by Baptist leaders who have experience in this area. Resourcing might be from multiple streams including the local congregation, regional mission grants and possibility national mission grants given specifically for this purpose.
- *Create a church planting programme* within areas where a high proportion of 18-35s live but where there are no existing Baptist churches (i.e. a new housing area designed with a high proportion of accommodation for younger first-time buyers and/or lower income renters), or in areas where the local Baptist church may choose not to engage with the offer of training and resourcing. The suggestion was made that it might prove helpful to provide a focused target of, say, 10 new church plants in areas with a high young adult population in the next 5 years.

*Actions* – The present model seen in the CofE’s ‘resource churches’ requires significant financial investment. Notwithstanding that some financial resource would be required to implement the above recommendation, I wonder whether it needs to be on anything like the scale seen within the ‘resource church’ model. If younger adults prize community, belonging, authenticity, missional engagement which produces genuine societal change, the ‘guide by my side’ at least as much as the ‘sage on the stage’, I wonder whether we already have the building blocks available within our churches to successfully engage this generation. Specific training for churches in areas with a high proportion of young adults will no doubt be of huge benefit and, if there is a perceived desire amongst these churches, a training team and training resources should, and could, be produced relatively quickly. Equally, if areas for new church plants that will engage with young adults are identified, appropriate selection of and investment in church planters will be required. This too seems like an achievable target if the recommendation is accepted.

The report author is unconvinced of the missional need to attempt to mirror the CofE ‘resource church’ model. If this were discerned to be the way God is leading us, I have no doubt that He would supply the significant resources required. However, I see no great advantage in copying an already existing model, particularly if doing so may lead to denominational ‘competition’. As a Baptist family, we have something unique to bring to God’s family table. We should employ the huge creativity we have been gifted with in our family of churches to identify what that might ‘look like’ for young adults finding faith in the U.K. today rather than offering the same model that already exists but with different denominational branding. I am aware others will disagree. No model of church that is actively engaging with and leading young adults (or others) to Jesus is a bad thing! However, we presently have an opportunity to seek God for how best to engage with those who might not naturally ‘fit’ these existing models of church. Might our future engagement with young adults not just reflect one model but many models of church, thus reflecting something of the diversity represented within this generation?

- Could each of our 13 Baptist Associations, in consultation with their churches, identify 2 existing churches who would be willing to be trained and resourced to engage with this generation, or new church planting opportunities in areas with a high proportion of young adults in the local population?
- Would Regional Associations be prepared to commit financial resource to supporting training and other required resources to implement this recommendation?
- Might a national fund be created from which grants are given to support training and resourcing of churches/church plants who are seeking to engage with young adults?
- Could resource be committed to gathering a national team of trainers to offer to those churches who wish to engage with young adults, and to producing the training resources required?
- Is it worth it?

The following recommendations were also made during this consultation process. They are no more or less important than the three highlighted in greater detail above, around which there was a high level of consensus amongst the practitioner group. As such, they are equally worthy of consideration and implementation. Some are quite specific whilst others might be seen to undergird and/or be embraced by the above recommendations. For the sake of brevity, they are offered in simple bullet-point form but the report author is happy to comment further on request.

Other recommendations:

- National cross-denominational collaboration.
- Continuing professional development for Ministers with specific reference to young adults.
- Invest in evangelism training for young people (Gen Z) in our churches to be actively involved in evangelism/mission in their context.
- Release innovation grants for pioneering, gospel-centred vision.
- Appoint someone to facilitate churches to create better websites/coms that engage with young adults.
- Recognise and celebrate a passionate, high-faith, high-risk culture.

## Final thoughts

It will not have escaped the reader's notice that I have repeatedly asked the question, "Is it worth it?". This, of course, is an intentionally provocative attempt to lead our thinking to also consider some supplementary questions; "Does anything really need to change?", "Are these recommendations the best approach to take?", "If not these, then what?", "If not now, then when?". I suspect that most readers of this report would answer the broad question of "Is it worth attempting to engage and release young adults in mission and leadership?" with a resounding, "Yes!". The implications of implementing these recommendations, though, will be costly. Put bluntly, we can't afford this! "Is it worth the financial costs involved?" - I find very few examples through the history of the Church of God's Spirit working through those who could 'afford it'! And so the question of "Is it worth it?" is not about finances but rather about discerning God's will in this. If we are sufficiently convinced he is calling us as a family of churches, Associations and colleges to implement some or all of the above recommendations, then the question is re-framed, "Is it worth putting all we have (and more) in to what God is calling us to do?". There can only be one answer.

It was a genuine privilege to help facilitate such an experienced and insightful group of practitioners in this consultation process. Each has hugely encouraging stories to tell of how they have seen God at work amongst young adults and I thank God that he has raised them to leadership within the family of God at this moment in our journey together. I cannot help but think this is no cosmic coincidence! My prayer is that this report will not be added to many others sitting on a shelf until a research student in Baptist history discovers and references it in forty years from now, but that at this significant moment in the life of the Baptist family, we might embrace with faith the huge opportunities that God is laying before us to engage with and release this new generation in mission and leadership in this nation and beyond for his Kingdom purposes... let's crack on!

# 04 Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Attendee List for Emerging Adults Gathering – 4 (12 noon) -5 (2pm) Dec 2018

Name	Association
Nick Allan	YBA
Marjorie Allan	YBA
Mark Hirst	SEBA
Pete Everitt	HEBA
Claire Earl	EBA
Andrew Ginn	CBA
Pete James	LBA
Chloe Richards	SWaBC
Graham Doel	SCBA
Jonny Hirst	NWBA
Graham Ensor	YBA
Mark Ord	BMS
Ben Drabble	BMS
Phil Knox	EA
Carl Smethurst	SWBA

## Appendix 2

### Programme for Emerging Adults Gathering

#### Tues 4/12/18

12noon	Arrival
1-2pm	Dinner
2-2.30pm	Introductions & Worship
2.30-4pm	Session 1*
4-4.30pm	Coffee break
4.30-6pm	Session 2*
6-7pm	Evening Meal
7-8.30pm	Session 3*
8.30pm >	Free Time

#### Wed 5/12/18

7.45-9am	Breakfast
9-10am	Worship/Prayer
10-11am	Session 4 - Common Themes
11-11.30am	Coffee break
11.30-1pm	Session 5 - Future Vision
1-2pm	Dinner
2pm>	Depart

\*Each contributor will be given 20 mins to,

1. share how they are engaging with/empowering/releasing for mission 18-35 year olds in their context
2. identify key features/themes/factors that they have found to be important in doing so.

<i>Session 1</i>	<i>Session 2</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Marjorie &amp; Nick Allan</li><li>○ Mark Hirst</li><li>○ Pete Everitt</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Claire Earl</li><li>○ Andrew Ginn</li><li>○ Pete James</li><li>○ Chloe Richards</li></ul>
<i>Session 3</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Graham Doel</li><li>○ Jonny Hirst</li><li>○ BMS - Ben Drabble</li></ul>

## Appendix 3

### Summary of Practitioner Presentations

#### 1. share how you are engaging with/empowering/releasing 18-35 year olds for mission in your context

*Nick & Marjorie – The Well, Sheffield*

More emphasis on Culture than on Vision – more ‘who we are’ rather than ‘what we do’.

The Well culture is,

- o Who God is
- o Who we are
- o What we do together

*Mark Hirst, Associate Pastor, Battle BC*

Leadership Team were all Baby Boomers and had been an older generation leadership for 30+ years > church split, younger gen’s left.

Millennial leaders entering in to church leadership struggle, older leaders struggling to hand over responsibility.

Mark releasing millennials through house-groups offering stability, family, hospitality. Lots of non-Christians involved.

Releasing millennials through one-to-one mentoring

Building a strong sense of community > strong sense of cohesion

Maintain relationships with young adults, even when away at Uni

Mission trips also helped to inspire/release younger leaders – particularly formative.

*Claire Earl – Minister, Burlington Baptist Church, Ipswich & Research for Millennial Leadership (Forge)*

Has internship programme in her church – FORM-uk.org – big on imitating authentic leadership... mentoring++

Allowing millennials to innovate but with the security of knowing that mentors are there to ‘hold’ and ‘protect’ them.

*Andrew Ginn – Pastor Bunyan BC*

Biggest challenge: our current pattern of church is better at maintaining existing disciples rather than making new disciples.  
Question: do we need to ‘let go’ this way of doing church and allow a new way of church to develop amongst millennials?

We need to be willing to change everything.

Millennials are much more devoted to Jesus than to Church.

Do we want to induct millennials in to a pattern of church that doesn’t really work or apply in post-Christendom?

We need to encourage millennials to begin to explore church for the future in the here and now (not reliant on as much money etc).

What do millennials need to re-contextualise theology for their generation/culture?

Millennials want 'life balance' more than just a 'work/life balance'.

Appoint a millennial as their lead Minister.

Make 18-35's a priority in the life of the church

Create a deliberate line of succession.

Keep in touch with Uni students – set up pray partners for them

Think about those 18-35s whom the church is already in contact with such as parent & toddlers – prioritise this over others areas of church.

Improve tech – esp. website

Create missional communities.

Look at models in society that are attracting millennials i.e. ParkRun

*Pete James - LBA*

Recognise the transient nature of millennial lifestyle.

Recognise the diversity of the millennial generation

Millennials are highly mobile with a busy lifestyle and are theologically & ecclesiologically diverse.

Need to create a community for free expression – not giving all the answers but helping people explore faith/belief.

Those in leadership (age, ethnicity etc) send a huge message to the rest of the church and community

We need to not forget Gen Z – how are churches thinking through releasing leadership in this generation?

Recognise the changing nature of family life for this generation.

Create a younger Ministers group in the Association and a younger leaders network

Recognise mental health issues in this generation.

*Chloe Richards – Regional Developer for Alpha Wales & Young Adults worker at Cornerstone Church, Swansea*

Has 100 young adults in her church

Mission is 'whole life' for young adults

Discipleship is key to mission – living out Jesus

Discipleship is based on how to live biblically – talk through the nitty gritty issues.

Make it practical – explain how to live a Christian life... explain the fullness of life with Jesus to them.

Recognise the 'cultural norms' for millennials i.e. always have their phone in their hand.

They don't want 'a sage on the stage, they want a guide by their side'!

Church would work well for Millennials, they just need to see that.

Community is key for this generation – Alpha works because of the relationships that are built more than because of the talks.

Community is prioritised over stand-alone events.

Raising leaders for mission shows it's important for the whole church (as opposed to leaders for other church activities).

Invest in younger leaders (15-18's) – if we don't use them, someone else will.

Make mission fun – social, adventure etc...

Mission through healing is having a massive effect – offering to pray for healing for people (not just in church... Tesco, school etc) is part of the DNA of Cornerstone church.

*Graham Doel – Freeset – making bags and apparel in Calcutta, works p/t for New Road BC, Oxford*

Experience in 'mission business' / social enterprise in Shared Space Southend and now in Freeset.

Be nice to the younger generation!

Be inclusive, inc. LGBTQ community.

Empower this generation, esp. women.

Social enterprise allows creative expression to be released which can also have a social impact... something that younger generations find engaging and inspiring.

*Jonny Hirst – NWBA, Young Enabler – Kay St BC, Lancashire*

Works with Interns (18-19, New Wine Discipleship Year).

NWBA runs an annual youth weekend but is now developing young leaders programme called NWBA Disciple. Different parts being, Participate, Serve, Engage, Lead & Life Skills.

Mentor based (mentor is normally someone from their local church). High investment in personal relationships.

Expression of faith needs to grow organically rather than being told what to think 'from the front'.

*Ben Drabble – BMS (until recently responsible for Action Teams aimed at 18-23 year olds)*

Action Teams – starts with a x1 month training at IMC, then 6 months mission, then back to tour around BU churches.

How effective are BMS Action Teams for discipleship? Answer: VERY effective in terms of participants own faith, involvement in church and in term of social justice.

## **2. identify key features/themes/factors that you have found to be important in engaging with/empowering/releasing 18-35 year olds for mission.**

Key factors,

*Nick & Marjorie – The Well, Sheffield*

- o Culture – 'high bar' spirituality.
- o Passionate spirituality & Worship – lots of resource goes in to this – an expectation that God will move
- o Authenticity – lots of testimonies... very real to life stuff
- o Welcome & hospitality – main gatherings and in small communities with a cause beyond themselves. A lot of discipleship happens around the home



- o Empowerment – ‘dreaming with God’, both for those new to faith and those returning to church. Recognising that 18-35s are a ‘can do’ generation. Some of the stuff that happens as result of ‘dreaming with God’ is pretty organic rather than central organised.
- o Engaging with mission in other churches ... low ownership, high release of mission
- o Creating spaces for intentional decisions to be made – ‘response time’ at end of services
- o Some homogenous age groups and dedicated communication (website and materials designed by people in their 20’s).
- o Spending money on media firm to run social media.
- o Leaders identified by observation - trained in ‘huddles’.
- o Baptists fit well with a generation that doesn’t respect hierarchy.

*Mark Hirst, Associate Pastor, Battle BC*

Being part of a church with clear Vision

Authentic church demonstrating real faith

Having a sense of identity with family of churches (such as New Frontiers, HTB etc)

Value clear leadership but that is accessible to them

Development opportunities engaged with them

Arguments/issues in churches didn’t engage them – conflict drove away millennial generations.

Internships are really important.

*Pete Everitt, Pastor, Yardley BC, Birmingham*

Benefitted in his own Ministry by a pastor who mentored him and gave permission to him to lead.

In turn, he disciples other younger adults in small groups.

Creating a culture where yp (16+) get involved in serving in their local church and are part of leadership teams. They have gone on to serve in leadership roles.

Discipleship taking place in informal settings – pubs, cafes etc...

Spiritual parents / mentors are key - heavy time investment

Responding immediately to millennials demonstrates value to them.

Giving young leaders ‘up front’ roles encourages others of the same generation to join and get involved.

Giving context in teaching is important – don’t assume prior knowledge

Make teaching relevant to all stages of discipleship

Millennials want to have a voice at the table.

Point millennials in the right direction for good further research

- o Create real community – authentic
- o Give a cause to live for

- o Lived out conviction – seen in others and for themselves
- o Personal coaching – mentoring /parent-figure
- o Deep conversation – millennials have a global mindset
- o Value cooperation – voice at the table, part of a team
- o Releasing creativity – within boundaries.

*Claire Earl – Baptist Minister in Ipswich, Research for Millennial Leadership (Forge), Leader of FORM-uk.org*

Millennials preferred teaching style is 'learning on the job' with 'mentors' to walk alongside them.

Scripture is the source of info for their identity rather than peer pressure

Conflict drives millennials away in the main. Those that do work through conflict become stronger leaders for it. Conflict resolution for millennials often means they just move on (jobs, churches etc).

FORM is a discipleship year out for 18-25's.

*Pete James – LBA*

Recognise the diversity of this demographic (faith/ethnicity/work profile/family profile)

Need to create community (esp in a digital age)

What does it mean to rediscover 'Shalom', esp with mental health challenges?

Give authority to 18-35's for decision making – not just tokenism.

*Ben Drabble – BMS (until recently responsible for Action Teams aimed at 18-23 year olds)*

- o Peer to peer discipleship
- o Responsibility and action – empowerment – huge adventure with a huge safety net
- o Residential
- o The world church – opportunity to learn from the world church