Losing Our Religion

This workshop was taught by Erika Liu, the University of Wisconsin pastor in college ministry.

The term "young adult" usually refers to those ages 18 through 30 years. That is too large a scope, since people those ages vary so much in life experience. A college kid and a young professional have different views, wishes and dreams. A better definition is: out of high school with no kids yet.

This group feels that they ARE spiritual, even more so than those older than they are. The fact is that the pews are filled with the same number of young adults as 40 years ago without much change in the numbers.

Young adults are globally aware, transitory, don't need an exclusive religion and are plugged in to digital media. Studies show that those young adults who attended church as children tend to take their young families to church, BUT they are delaying having children until their careers are established before having a family or not marrying at all.

The average age of a member of the Presbyterian Church, USA is 62 years old. The average age of a worker at Sony is 36, at Facebook is 28, at IBM is 38 and at Google is 38. Offering the same thing to those in the church and the young professionals out there won't work, since they are of different generations.

Churches usually cater to families, not singles, because families have more money that they are willing to donate and have more people in their "grouping" to sit in the pews. Young Adult Ministry doesn't get that kind of return, so churches need to see this ministry as an outreach or mission project instead to feel more successful and to realize the benefits.

There is a newly defined ailment known as "Fear Of Missing Out" or FOMO. This affects many people of all ages, as seen when entering a restaurant and the adults and their children are all on their mobile devices. This has become a catalyst for dysfunction and anxiety. Because of the exponential reaches of digital media, it is impossible to keep up with all that is out there. We need to realize that it is impossible to keep in touch with all our acquaintances and our acquaintances and their friends too. We (adults and kids alike) need to learn to prioritize. Keeping up with the information and people that are of priority to us will still be a fulltime task.

When young adults do attend our churches, they need to be asked to do meaningful work, not just a token job or run youth group, since this may not be in their skill set. They are working fulltime and are spending time on maintaining health more than any other generation, with little time to spare.

Churches need a web presence for when the young adult is ready to go back to church, since this is how they search for everything from the closest gas station with the cheapest gas to a restaurant with an available table.

Realizing some of these tendencies of young adults is a huge clue for churches. We, the church, don't need to add more programs or things to do. So, what can we do?

- *We need to connect with young adults and offer real relationships by talking to them at our yoga or tae kwondo class.
- *We can offer them free use of our washer and dryer, developing a bond during the drying cycle.
- *We need to make a space for them in our church buildings to be used at a great rate for their self-enrichment and healthy endeavors.
- *We need to create real, tangible connections between a new college freshman and thecampus ministry or to a church with a similar ideology in their new college town.
- *We need to go out to them like a missionary goes out into the field.
- *We need to give money to support campus or young adult ministries (in our area, that would be supporting Camp Whitman, a great ministry for the young adults who are camp counselors).

These are just some ways to keep young adults from "losing our religion." What is your church doing in the area of Young Adult Ministry?