



Commitment #4: Fuel a Warm Community

“Instead of focusing on cool worship or programs, aim for warm peer and intergenerational friendships.”

From the Fuller Youth Institute:

Our research clearly and emphatically identified *warmth* as core commitment of churches growing [together]. We had a hunch at the start of our research that authentic community would be important to young people in your church and neighborhood. But we were surprised by how much of growing [together] is influenced by whether or not congregations are warm and accepting.

What is warmth?

In healthy and effective churches, young people and adults described their congregations with repeated words such as *welcoming, accepting, belonging, authentic, hospitable, and caring*. We began to call this the *warmth cluster*.

By suggesting that churches need to grow warmer, we don’t mean adults should be nice to young people. Nice does not cut it. It isn’t how Jesus



responded to people, and it falls short of the depth we saw in congregations. Warmth is more than superficial community. It’s like family. In fact, the phrase “like family” surfaced as the most common term young people used to describe their church in our interviews and field visits.

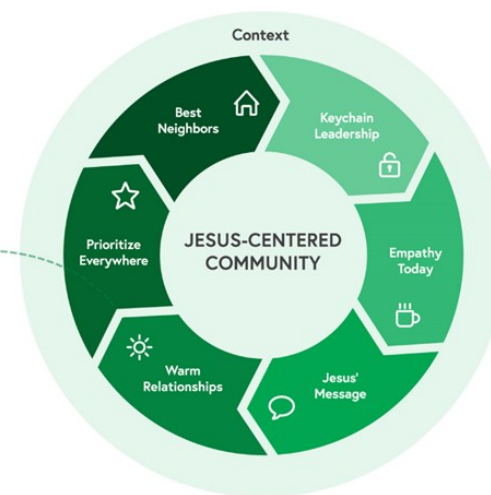
Warmth often lives much deeper than your programs and structures – it’s the lifeblood coursing through the veins of your church.

Warm Intergenerational Relationships Grow Everyone

Much of American youth and young adult ministry tends to be devoted to building relationship with age-group peers. While peer friendships are crucial, a variety of analyses suggest that intergenerational relationships are also incredibly important.

Specifically, churches with close intergenerational relationships show higher faith maturity and vibrancy, as well as more examples of the six core commitments in action.

The good news is that when we bridge generation gaps, *everyone* grows. Cross-generational discipleship is beneficial not only for young people but also for older generations who need the vitality of the young to inspire their faith just as much as the young need wise elders to ground theirs. Faith, after all, is not just passed *down*. It’s passed *around*.



Your Growing Together Team:

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