



Commitment #5: Prioritize Young People (and Families) Everywhere

“Instead of giving lip-service to how much young people matter, look for creative ways to tangibly support, resource, and involve them in all facets of your congregation.”

From the Fuller Youth Institute:

Churches [growing together] prioritize young people *everywhere*. Even when it means giving up preferences or shifting what in the past may have been considered non-negotiable. Even when it means relinquishing traditional authority and power in order to embrace the young. Prioritizing teenagers and young adults has made the difference between ailing and thriving – not only for young people but



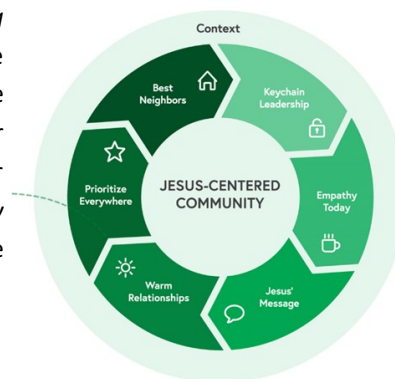
also for the whole congregation. One pastor of over 40 years put it like this: “Everybody rises when you focus on children and teens.” Adults in another church reflected, “Young people are like salt. When they’re included, they make everything taste better.”

What Does Prioritization Look Like?

How do churches that grow young make youth and emerging adults a greater priority? When they think about budget, strategy, worship planning, programming, community life, theology, and all the other aspects of church life, they think about young people. They intentionally pay attention.

Young People as Contributors

When our research team asked high school students why they keep coming back to First Baptist, they frequently named their responsibilities at church. Playing in the worship band, serving in children’s ministry, helping in the neighborhood – these needs keep them accountable and connected. When young people in your church and community know they are needed and invited into participation just like everyone else, they sense that they play a *load-bearing* role in the congregation. They become purposefully co-participants in the life of the body rather than junior participants or future members. Their voices, hands, and hearts matter *now* for the ongoing life and work of the congregation, and they know it.



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Prioritizing Families

Parents still carry the most important weight in their kids’ faith development. This is true not only in childhood but also through adolescence. Research continues to affirm that the best predictor of a young person’s faith is the faith of their parents. That means the role of ministry leaders who care about kids must also include the care, equipping, and formation of parents and families.

Jesus and Young People

Theologically, we stand on solid ground when we prioritize young people everywhere in our congregation. Jesus led the way for us in his shocking attention to children and his reorientation of the community around them. It was a *disproportionate* prioritization. What would it look like if your church took the same approach to children, teenagers, and young adults today?



Your Growing Together Team:

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