

OBJECTIVE

To design and plan activities, ministry, and mission by use of current trends that impact ministry and mission.

Notes, Journal

PROCESS

Use the following “Panes of Perspective” chart to imagine each trend as a glass pane in a window that helps us see more clearly how to connect with younger generations. Use the following questions as you plan ministry and events:

a. Is this ministry or event something we could empower someone or a group to design and implement?

b. Does this ministry or event foster a process of shared discovery and collaborative planning rather than being tightly defined?

c. What relevance does this ministry or event have to the real problems people face in their neighborhoods and world?

d. How do we connect with those who find it physically difficult to get to church? Are there ways, other than being physically present, for them to connect to the congregation's ministry? (Are virtual communities, such as Facebook, possibilities?)

e. How does this event or ministry cultivate genuine opportunity for meaningful relationships to develop?

f. How does this event or ministry reach a diversity of backgrounds (e.g., ethnic, social, economic, age, single, family)?

g. How does this event or ministry help create an alternative future of hope and healing?

h. How does this event or ministry connect individuals for opportunities to make a positive difference locally or globally?

PROCESS TIP

Remember to frame the ministry and events under one of the five mission initiatives (Invite People to Christ; Abolish Poverty, End Suffering; Pursue Peace on Earth; Develop Disciples to Serve; Experience Congregations in Mission).

Panes of Perspective Chart

Trend (Context)	Comments	Implications for the Congregation
Generational Changes in Leadership	Younger generations have leadership in other organizations. They have a different approach to and expectations of leadership. They are collaborative, fast paced, and insist on sharing in solutions.	In general, congregational processes are often slow, can be hierarchical, and not as participative in decision making. Younger adults find this frustrating when compared with their professional careers and organizations.
Clashing of World Views—Modern and Post- modern Perspectives	Although difficult to define precisely, “post-moderns” see the interconnectedness of all of life (people, environment, religions). They don’t draw lines between sacred and secular, Earth and heaven, etc. Spirituality is a journey—not indoctrination or holding a set of beliefs. Questions are as critical as answers because they lead toward beauty and truth.	Congregational life tends to be an indoctrination model to promote beliefs. Churches and denominations in the U.S. have become more about having right beliefs than a way of life that impacts the world. Sunday mornings in many congregations don’t foster exploration and only allow dialogue within tightly settled doctrinal boundaries. The congregation’s tightly defined worldview does not match reality for many younger adults.
Dismissing the Irrelevant	Younger generations have little patience for institutions more concerned about tradition, rituals, and self-preservation than responding to real human need and suffering in the world.	The average congregation for many younger adults seems out of touch with what is going on in the world. Real neighborhood, national, and world issues are rarely discussed in light of the good news. There is often a serious disconnect between Jesus’ radical message of the kingdom and the activities and ministries of the congregation.
Impact of Technology	Younger generations are connected to what is going on and are used to quick access to information.	Congregational delivery systems are slow and often in only one mode. For example, education is often only delivered in workshops or classes.
Genuine Relationships	Deep, authentic, and meaningful relationships are critical.	Most congregations don’t programmatically foster meaningful relationships. Congregational space is often not relational space (e.g., pews, hard chairs, sterile buildings). Older generations are often hesitant to disclose personal concerns and are uncomfortable with the knowledge younger adults share about one another.
Increasing Diversity	Many if not most neighborhoods are changing with a significant increase in ethnic, cultural, and economic diversity.	Congregations are not prepared to relate to changing neighborhoods. There are significant needs and opportunities that require more language skills and new levels of cultural awareness to relate effectively to a changing population.
Participation in Creating Reality	Being a part of the solution is important! Younger generations do not want to accept the status quo. They want to participate in meaningful change.	Congregations are often set in their ways. Many are happy with things as they are and don’t understand why things need to change. Some would say, “it was good enough for me, why is it not good enough for them?”
Meaning and Connection	Overall, younger generations are seeking to be part of something where they find meaningful connection with others who share common interests and values.	Many congregations don’t have a clear focus or mission. Most efforts seem to be directed toward making Sunday morning happen. Many members have drifted apart over time and there is not a sense of common purpose and community that once was present.