Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

This ministry focus paper entitled

A YOUTH DISCIPLESHIP MODEL OF ADOPTION FOR
AUSTRALIAN ADVENTIST YOUTH LEADERS
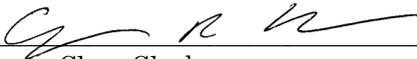

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has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary

upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:

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A YOUTH DISCIPLESHIP MODEL OF ADOPTION FOR AUSTRALIAN
ADVENTIST YOUTH LEADERS

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

NICHOLAS KROSS
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ABSTRACT

**A Model of Adoption for Emerging Adults in the Australian Seventh-day
Adventist Church**
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2012

The goal of this study was to develop an effective model of ministry in the local church context to emerging adults living in Australia. It is argued that this model would involve mature Christians acting as mentors who include and involve emerging adults in the life of the church. The model was developed as a result of a biblical theology of adoption, based on the relationship between Christ and his disciples; and that Paul had with his church members.

The study revealed that the largest group that are disengaging from active involvement in the Seventh-day Adventist Church are young men up to thirty-four years of age. Due to several factors, many emerging adults find the local church irrelevant to their daily lives. While in some cases this is due to the need to travel for further education or employment, it remains significant that many don't re-engage in the church at their new residential location.

In order to reverse the trend of disengagement, local church leaders need to actively nurture relationships with emerging adults and engage them in appropriate ministries and activities in the life of the church. Developing relationships will benefit the younger members as they learn from mature members, but more importantly the faith of the mentor in many cases will enable the emerging adult to grow in their spiritual insight and understanding.

Content Reader: Chap Clark, PhD

Words: 231

To my wife Andrea and children Nicholas, Caitlin and Joshua, who always encouraged me during the long writing process, and who have supported me even when the stress levels were high and family time was scarce

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The Australian Seventh-day Adventist Church faces a crisis with the loss of

thousands of emerging adults who, for a variety of reasons, are disengaging from active

involvement at local church level. In order to stem the flood of emerging adults who are

choosing to depart from attendance at their local congregation, the church corporately

must provide the nurture and care that is needed to display Christ's love for his people.

This ministry focus project will attempt to reveal the underlying issues that are causing

such a decline in attendance and provide some strategies that will be beneficial in

nurturing emerging adults to re-engage in a faith journey with Christ. The first task is to

define the Australian social context and follow with a demographical study of the

Australian Adventist church. The second task is to provide a theology of ministry to

emerging adults as well as an analytical lens through which all emerging adult ministries

need to be viewed. Finally an informed model of youth discipleship practice for the

Australian Seventh-day Adventist Church will be outlined.

Jeffery Arnett coined the term "emerging adults" as a way of defining a particular

age group who are in a state of transition. The approximate age range Arnett refers to is

"18-25 years old."[1] The specific ministry need in this research project is to create an

environment where emerging adults will stay engaged with local churches and grow

spiritually toward maturity. The reason this topic is of importance is that many emerging

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[1] Jeffery Jensen Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach 3rd Ed* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2007), 13.

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adults, for various reasons, no longer find the church as meaningful or caring, and as a result are disengaging from active involvement.[2]

As a youth ministry professional, it is of interest to research and analyse the reasons why emerging adults are leaving faith communities, in an attempt to create relevant ministry models that will reverse this negative trend. The role of youth ministry professionals within the Adventist church administrative structure is to develop ministry resources for youth leaders at the local church level. Thus my role in Australia as the Director of Youth Ministries South Pacific Division is to gain insights into the causes that lay at the foundation of the lifestyle trends of Adventist emerging adults.

The purpose of the first part of this ministry project is to establish why many emerging adults choose to stop attending their local church. In order to gain insights into the challenges Adventists face in Australia, the broader Australian community context will be summarised. This chapter will outline some of the societal and cultural norms within Australian society that influence the Australian worldview. This discussion will provide the platform for a discussion on Adventist youth ministry to Australian emerging adults.

The current context of Adventist youth ministry in Australia needs to be analysed by examining the local Adventist church demographic, typical youth ministry structures, programs in place and finally lifestyle norms for Adventist emerging adults. Having

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[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics, *2006 Census Tables: 20680-Religious Affiliation by Age - Time Series Statistics (1996, 2001, 2006 Census Years)* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006), http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/ABSNavigation/prenav/ViewData?action=404&documentproductno=0&documenttype=Details&order=1&tabname=Details&areacode=0&issue=2006&producttype=Census Tables&javascript=true&textversion=false&navmapdisplayed=true&breadcrumb=TLPD&&collection=Census&period=2006&productlabel=Religious Affiliation by Age - Time Series Statistics (1996, 2001, 2006 Census Years)&producttype=Census Tables&method=Place of Usual Residence&topic=Religion&; (accessed November 24, 2010).

discussed these core elements that impact the lives of Adventist emerging adults, it will

be easier to establish the reasons why so many younger Adventists are disengaging from

active involvement in the life of the church. While it is recognised that many Adventist

emerging adults choose to pursue tertiary study or seek employment away from their

homes, there is evidence that other factors influence their disengagement from their local

church.[3]

The lack of meaningful engagement within local church communities may also

contribute to the disengaging process. In conjunction with the lack of involvement there

is a distinct lack of significant relationships with established church members. These

factors combine to create a scenario where emerging adults, find the practice of attending

a local church lacks relevance. The lack of engagement in any form of ministry, in

conjunction with a lack of significant relationships with mature Christian members,

serves to diminish the value of regular church attendance.[4]

In addition to the factors mentioned above, many youth leaders and established

members lack understanding of the psychosocial developmental stages of emerging

adults.[5] This is a more subtle influence; however, the implications of not understanding

the developmental stages of emerging adults creates a breakdown in communication and

a lack in the ability of many adults to effectively nurture them. The outcome of this

breakdown is that many emerging adults are not included in decision-making forums and

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[3] Barry Gane, *Loving Them Back Leading Them Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2010), 24-30.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Brad J Strahan, *Valuegenesis: Young Adult Study Core Report: A study of Faith Development and Value Formation Among Seventh-day Adventist Young Adults* (Wahroonga, NSW: South Pacific Division Youth Ministries Committee, 1997), 49.

as a result lack a significant voice in the church. As a result many emerging adults feel

disempowered and undervalued by the older church membership.[6]

This sense of disempowerment further complicates the social environment for

many emerging adult Adventists, as it lessens the value of maintaining a subculture of

separation from the world.[7] Adventists have traditionally maintained a particular religious

subculture that is lived out within the broader Australian culture. While this subculture is

still actively promoted by the older generation, younger Adventists feel less inclined to

inculcate this thinking into their lifestyles. The view of a majority of emerging adults is

that many older members are living phony lives and have sited this as the main reason

why they are leaving the church.[8] The other reasons why many emerging adults have left

the church are perceptions that the church placed too high an emphasis on non-essentials,

and that older church members were uncaring and critical.[9] For these reasons many

emerging adults chose to assimilate into the broader Australian culture and disengage

from active involvement in the church. As youth leaders deal with these issues it is

imperative that they are informed in regard to the theological foundations that undergird

any attempt to minister to emerging adults.

The second part of this ministry research project will focus on the theological

foundations that undergird the formulation and practice of Australian Adventist youth

ministry. For youth ministry to be effective there are appropriate theological principles

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[6] Strahan, *Valuegenesis,* 51.

[7] Ibid., 52.

[8] Ibid., 53.

[9] Ibid., 54.

that provide a solid platform from which to develop long-term ministry programs and facilitate spiritual growth.[10] The Adventist church has a strong history of youth ministry in Australia, which places a strong emphasis on salvation in Christ and sharing the Gospel with lost souls in preparation for His soon return.[11] These theological foundations will be discussed and several principles will be summarised in order to build a revised theology of youth ministry. The theology will also include a discussion on kingdom trajectory and will include many biblical antecedents that are relevant to Adventist youth ministry. These theological principles will provide additional input along with other texts for potential models of effective youth ministry in the current Australian context. These models will facilitate the relational elements that are vital in order to create meaningful relationships with the body of believers in the local church. Due to the informal relational style of many emerging adults, a theology of adoption and nurture will be developed.

To ensure that theology informs the model of youth ministry being developed, an analytical template will be employed by which to assess the effectiveness of current youth ministry practice. As societal trends change, youth leaders must enter into a review process so as to maintain the effectiveness of the model of ministry they are implementing. The purpose of the analytical template is to assist youth leaders to understand the key elements of effective ministry to emerging adults. The end goal of any analysis is to critically assess the current practice and have the knowledge to revise

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[10] Kenda Creasy Dean, "Fessing Up: Owning Our Theological Commitments," in *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry,* eds. Kenda Creasy Dean, Chap Clark and Dave Rahn (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 30.

[11] South Pacific Division Youth Department, *A Brief History of Youth Ministry in the South Pacific* (Wahroonga, NSW: South Pacific Division Department of Youth Ministry, 2010), 4. http://pathfinders.adventistconnect.org/site_data/86/assets/0025/1420/MG_SPD_History_of_Youth_Ministry_-_Apr_2010.pdf (accessed December 13, 2011).

models and programs as needed. Thus the aim of analysis is to ensure that the core elements of youth ministry are clearly evident in all ministry initiatives. The core element is to promote the spiritual growth of emerging adults leading to them becoming fully committed disciples of Christ. As theological reflection informs relational elements of ministry to emerging adults, effective models of youth ministry praxis are developed.

The third part of this research project will focus on more effective models of ministry praxis in the Australian Adventist church. In particular, the adoptional model of ministry will be highlighted as effective youth ministry praxis for emerging adults. The adoptional model of youth ministry would involve a mentoring relationship between a mature believer and an emerging adult, where spiritual disciplines are caught as much as taught. In this mentoring relationship, the mature believer nurtures the emerging adult and teaches ministry principles as a natural part of his or her relationship. As the mentor engages in various spiritual disciplines, both private and public, they model a genuine relationship with both God and their fellow human beings. Through habits of worship, service and ministry practices, the emerging adult will be influenced toward a more intimate relationship with God and the body of the church. As the mentoring believer engages in missional activity, the emerging adult is exposed to the sending element of the church, where active engagement with the community is modelled. The adoptional model of ministry praxis, when utilised in a local church setting, will lead to spiritual growth and a sense of belonging in the life of the emerging adult.

The adoptional model of ministry praxis to emerging adults will be informed by theological foundations and grounded in relationships with mature believers. Within the context of relationship, ministry takes on a human form in the life of the mature believer,

who spends time with emerging adults and adopts them as spiritual disciples. These disciples become involved in the ministry activities of the mentoring believer who in turn shares insights into the worship disciplines that promote spiritual growth. As the ministry relationship develops, the mentor is able to deepen and expand the understanding of the young believer. Through both intentional relational involvement and connecting the younger believer with Christ through the spiritual disciplines, the younger believer is exposed to activities that bring them into a new understanding of who they are and how God intends to minister through them. As they gain insights into the life God has for them, they develop in maturity and spiritual strength and enter into more missional lifestyles themselves.

The Missional lifestyle of the youth leader/mature believer then becomes the model for the emerging adult who is working alongside his/her mentor. Through the vehicle of a range of missional lifestyle activities the youth leader is involved in, the younger believer becomes part of the ongoing missional agenda of the body of Christ. This missional engagement may take various forms depending on the individual's personal strengths and areas of giftedness. The discussion will develop several processes, which will hopefully be beneficial in the selection of the most likely mentor-disciple relationship. The development of resources for this process would be one of the roles of the local Youth Department personnel. In this respect, the church can offer professional leadership to local church leaders who would enter training in various forms of missional and relationship based ministry areas.

The role of the Youth Department personnel would be to act in a consultative capacity with local church youth leaders and offer resources and training in spiritual

disciplines, missional activities, and intentional relationship development. These resources would serve to support ministry at local church level and would enter a review process on a five-year basis. This would ensure that the training and resources remain current and informed by up to date practice. These strategies would become part of a training manual that would be produced for use within the youth and young adult ministry forums.

Once the major themes of the research are developed, the research study would then conclude with a summary of the main thrust of the argument in favour of an adoptional model of ministry to emerging adults. It is believed that this model would not only serve to minimise the numbers disengaging from the church, but also provide an environment where spiritual growth will take place. As emerging adults and more mature members unite in their missional efforts, the kingdom goal of the Adventist church, being the soon return of Christ, would be realised.

PART ONE

MINISTRY CHALLENGE

CHAPTER 1

CURRENT CONTEXT OF AUSTRALIAN EMERGING ADULT CULTURE

In order to develop an understanding of the current Australian youth context, statistics

from several studies will be reviewed in order to develop the platform for discussion.

During the past decade, many urban communities have witnessed dramatic economic,

social and political transformation. Due to a complex interplay of international political,

economic and social adjustments, many Western countries are experiencing higher levels

of social inequality and marginalization of the poor.[1] These societal changes have

particularly impacted the adolescent community in a negative way, as families have

adjusted to cope with extra pressures.[2] While Australians enjoy a very high standard of

living, currently rated by the human development index as second overall in comparison

with 187 other nations [3], there are still many complex issues that impact on the welfare of

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[1] Shawn Ginwright, Julio Cammarota and Pedro Nopuera, "Youth, Social Justice, and Communities: Toward a Theory of Urban Youth Policy," *Social Justice* 32, no. 3 (2005), 24f, http://www.shawnginwright.com/articles/youth_sj.pdf (accessed September 28, 2010).

[2] Ibid.

[3] UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) - Human Development Report Office. *Human Development Report 2011. Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All* (New York, YN: Pelgrave Macmillan, 2011), 127. http:// hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2011_EN_Complete.pdf (accessed April 19, 2012).

young Australians. Several areas that reveal the stress emerging adults face will be discussed in this chapter. Issues related to poverty, family systems, health, and racism will be highlighted in order to illustrate how emerging adults are being affected adversely.

Poverty and Homelessness

Australia enjoys a good standard of living across most recognised indicators.[4] However, in order to understand the complex mix of the contemporary emerging adult demographic, several subgroups within the younger Australian society need to be highlighted in order to gain insight into the realities that some emerging adults face. There are within the broader fabric of society, four subgroups who are more at risk of living below the poverty line. These are: single mothers, people with disabilities, people without partners and people born in non-English speaking countries.[5] Even within affluent societies, there are minority groups who are disadvantaged for a range of reasons. For example, early school leavers may not gain the adequate educational means to enter tertiary educational institutions and find it hard to gain work.[6] Just under 20 percent of working people aged fifteen upwards have very poor skills in the area of

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[4] UNDP. *Sustainability and Equity,* 127.

[5] Bruce Headey, *A Framework for Assessing Poverty, Disadvantage and Low Capabilities in Australia Melbourne Institute Report No. 6* (Melbourne: Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, The University of Melbourne, 2006), 23, http://www.melbourneinstitute.com/downloads/reports/no6.pdf (accessed October 27 2011).

[6] Ibid., 24.

numeracy and literacy, another measure of human capital.[7] Emerging adults often have little liquid wealth; in 2002, 14.4 percent of under thirty-five year olds were asset poor.[8]

This percentage represents numbers of individuals living with less than enough funds to maintain their homes. In spite of the fact that Australia is ranked high on the Human Development Index (HDI), many families live without adequate financial resources. The HDI compares the level of human wellbeing across the financial and social spectrum in different countries, with Australia listed at number 2 out of 187 countries.[9] These statistics reveal that while there are segments of Australian society that are still poor by national standards, the majority are living within relative comfort. Families struggling to provide many of the basic needs create problems for emerging adults. Lack of familial support and high stress levels impact emerging adults in different ways; in some cases, leaving home becomes the best option.

Australian homelessness figures are significant, with a total of 104 676 in 2006[10] of a total population of nearly 20 Million.[11] Of these, only 54 percent are over twenty-four years of age, which means 46 percent are twenty-three years old or younger. 10

[8] Headey, *Framework,* 26.

[7] Ibid., 25.

[9] UNDP. *Sustainability and Equity,* 127

[10] Chris Chamberlain and David Mackenzie, *Australian Census Analytic Program Counting the Homeless Australia 2006* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008), 11. http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/57393A13387C425DCA2574B900162DF0/$File/20500-2008Reissue.pdf (accessed September 20, 2011).

[11] Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *The People of Australia: Statistics from the 2006 Census* (Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia, 2008), 1. http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/research/_pdf/poa-2008.pdf (accessed March 28, 2012).

percent are under twelve years of age and 42 percent of the total number, are female.[12]

For many of these homeless people, basic human needs like personal safety and hygiene, medical care and educational opportunities are not catered for.

When consideration is given to the fact that homeless people have been dislodged from families, often with siblings, the negative impact on emerging adults and their families is magnified. Many are homeless due to marital breakdown, domestic violence or sexual abuse. For example, in Australia one of the more common reasons for homelessness is relationship or family breakdown. Considering the fact that 27 percent of the homeless population and time out from family at 14 percent, attribute their situation to their family breakdown.[13] More specifically for males under twenty-five years of age, 16.5 percent, said relationship breakdown was the cause, while for females under twenty-five years of age, 21.5 percent attributed their situation resulting from relationship breakdown, while 12.3 percent gave domestic violence as typical reasons why they had to leave home.[14]

While it must be noted that there are many reasons why people leave home, these figures demonstrate high levels of dysfunctionality within families. For some, leaving home is the result of poverty or other forms of abuse. For these adolescents, life is easier on the street than with their family. The parents for various reasons have abandoned their role as protectors, providers and mentors for their children at an age

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[12] Chamberlain, *Counting the Homeless,* 42.

[13] Sandra Hacker and Richard Madden, *Young Homeless People in Australia 2001-02* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2003), 61.
http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/hou/yhpa01-02/yhpa01-02.pdf (accessed October 30, 2011).

[14] Ibid.

when positive parental presence and influence is vital for effective social development and wellbeing. Poverty also contributes to adult abandonment of emerging adults. Emerging adults caught in these unfortunate situations have to make the transition into adulthood without the support of parents and extended family relatives. For others, family dysfunction results in separation or divorce, which will now be addressed.

Family Breakdown

High levels of family breakdown in Australia contribute to systemic abandonment of emerging adults in a significant percentage of families, causing siblings to live separately from one or both parents, or being shared between both separated parents. In 2006-2007, approximately one in four emerging adults aged eighteen to twenty four years of age had experienced parental divorce or permanent separation during their childhood.[15] The high number of families breaking down results in high levels of trauma and instability for many adolescents. The results of marriage breakdown are long term in nature, and involve many years of conflicted emotions and feelings of abandonment. In 2007, 49.2 percent of Australian marriage breakdowns involved children less than eighteen years of age,[16] and the trauma involved in this process leaves many adolescents fearful and feeling abandoned by those they love and trust.

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[15] Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Social Trends September 2010: Parental Divorce or Death During Childhood* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Bureau of statistics, 2010). http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/4BDE2206258480BFCA2577AC001582C6/$File/41020_deathdivorce.pdf (accessed March 28, 2012).

[16] Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Divorces, Australia*, cat, no 3307.0.55.001 (Canberra, ACT: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007). http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3307.0.55.001 (accessed October 30, 2011).

While there are support programs for grieving adults, support for many adolescents is lacking, leaving them to grieve alone with little or no safety network.[17] When adolescents experience severe traumatic events, they often respond by numbing out the painful emotions, leaving them unresolved.[18] Many adults struggle to cope with family breakdown and have difficulty offering adolescents the support and nurture they need. Adolescents who live under these conditions look for other support systems at school or from other less formal relationships. Feelings of abandonment have become a primary concern for social workers in schools, addressing grief and anger with adolescents affected by these kinds of trauma.[19]

Many adolescents affected by familial breakdown express interpersonal concerns, which can be defined as fear of abandonment.[20] With protective and supportive relationships limited as a result of family breakdown, many adolescents find it difficult to express feelings of anger, and hostility. As a result, adolescents often resort to self-criticism and depression, which can lead to social alienation and displays of hostility with peers and family members.[21] Self-criticism is often the result of self-blame, where

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[17] Paulette Walker and Michelle Shaffer, "Reducing Depression Among Adolescents Dealing with Grief and Loss: A Program Evaluation Report," *Health and Social Work,* 32, no.1 (Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gail, 2007), 67. http://www.tcfrochester.org/Children_pdfs/Reducing%20Stress%20in%20Adolescents%20Dealing%20with%20Grief.pdf (accessed November 26, 2010).

[18] Walker, *Reducing depression,* 67.

[19] Robbie Welch Christier Tourse, *et al.*, "A Collaborative Model of Clinical Preparation: A Move Toward Interprofessional Field Experience," *Journal of Social Work Education*, 41, no. 3 (Council on Social Work Education, 2005), 459, http://cswe.metapress.com/content/266v0j04374jgm57/ (accessed November 24, 2010).

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

adolescents attribute the cause of family breakdown directly to themselves. In addition to coping with the loss of parental support and direction, self-blame brings with it feelings of hopelessness and despair. Another common result of family breakdown is a sense of shame that comes with the adjustment of having to move between homes.[22]

Because separation and divorce are so prevalent in Australia, almost half the youth under the age of eighteen are likely to live in single adult homes.[23] With family breakdown affecting so many homes in Australia, it is not hard to see how adolescents can feel abandoned by their parents and adults in general. Without having a stable family with positive adult role models to guide them, adolescent relationships with peers and partners are affected negatively. Due in part to the absence of clear role models many adolescents, especially younger females, form relationships out of a need for security and belonging.

Pregnancy

With divorce and separation rates increasing, and absent fathers becoming more common, the negative impact on female adolescents in particular leads to low self-worth and a rise in sexual promiscuity.[24] While sexual promiscuity cannot be attributed completely to the breakdown of families, it remains one of the contributing factors.

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[22] Patricia L. Fry, "Helping America's Troubled Children," *World and I*, 15, no. 4 (Washington, DC: 2004), 312. http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?sid=19b5c162-0347-4cbe-aafd-29b0ab965973%40sessionmgr104&vid=1&hid=113&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=anh&AN=2946781 (accessed November 28, 2010).

[23] Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Divorces Australia,* (2007).

[24] Franklin B. Krohn and Zoe Bogan, "The affects Absent Fathers Have on Female Development and College Attendance," *College Student Journal*. 35 no. 4 . (Spring Hill, AL: Project Innovation, Inc, 2001), 599, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0FCR/is_4_35/ai_84017196/ (accessed November 28, 2010).

Pregnancy rates amongst young women in Australia are declining by international standards, with women aged twenty to twenty-four experiencing fifty-seven births per thousand in 2008.[25] A percentage of pregnancies are being aborted, which results in various forms of trauma, however, for emerging adults who choose to keep their babies the implications are significant.

The impact of raising children during emerging adulthood is long term with adverse consequences, especially if the person remains unmarried. Emerging adults who bear children without adequate parental support enter adulthood experiencing undue additional stress, relational limitations and emotional confusion. Even with the support of families, the task of dealing with unwanted pregnancies is daunting.

The lack of supportive adult role models affects the process of individuation many adolescents must transition through. If parental support is lacking, these tasks become more complex and difficult. Societal perspectives toward marriage and the traditional family are shifting dramatically, resulting in emerging adults becoming confused as to appropriate behavioural roles in intimate relationships.[26] Adolescents need stable environments in order to maintain the appropriate levels of intimacy and self-reliance in relationships.[27] Increasingly, these stable parental role models are disappearing due to family breakdown, leaving more emerging adults to fend for themselves and make

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[25]Australian Bureau of Statistics. *33010DO001_2008 Births, Australia, 2008* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008).
http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3301.02008t (accessed October 30, 2011).

[26] Paige D. Martin, Don Martin and Maggie Martin, "Reinventing Adolescence: New Rules for the Changing Family" *Annals of the American Psychotherapy Association*, 7 no. 2 (American Psychotherapy Association 2004), 15. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb013/is_2_7/ai_n29104400/ (accessed September 23, 2010).

[27] Ibid., 15.

decisions based on their limited experience. The result of diminishing numbers of solid

adult role models is another form of systemic abandonment.

The negative impact of early pregnancy and the breakdown of the family unit

have been briefly reviewed in order to shed light on some of the more blatant forms of

adult abandonment of emerging adults. But there are forms of abandonment that are far

more subtle and deeply ingrained in the broader community, and which will be discussed

now. Surprisingly, one of the cornerstones of modern society has become another subtle

form of adult abandonment of emerging adults. The process of education will be the next

focus of this essay.

Education

Compulsory secondary education is a more recent phenomenon in Australia. At

the end of WW2, one in ten Australians finished high school and entered university.[28]

Currently eight out of ten complete high school and enter university.[29] In fact, the 2010

HDI indicates the average Australian student will finish twelve years of schooling.[30]

However, the focus of education, which originally was to train for work and citizenship,

has undergone a shift toward the comprehensive schooling model.[31] This more recent

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[28] Richard Teese, John Polesel, *Undemocratic Schooling: Equity and Quality in Mass Secondary Education in Australia* (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 1.
http://books.google.com.au/books?hl=en&lr=&id=6KvoDDlwWxUC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=compulsory+secondary+education+in+Australia&ots=X51B1eoCmZ&sig=7NN5wFbdQpeefpq7MknF_50Pcu8#v=onepage&q=compulsory%20secondary%20education%20in%20Australia&f=false (accessed October 30, 2011).

[29] Ibid.

[30] UNDP (United Nations Development Program) – Human Development Report Office, *Human Development Report 2011. Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All* (New York, NY: Pelgrave Macmillan, 2011), 127. http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2011_EN_Complete.pdf (accessed April 19, 2012)

focus is toward academic performance.[32] While this focus has benefits, there are several unfortunate outcomes that have emerged from this focus.

The industrial (production line) model of education creates stress in many adolescents, because it ignores individual capabilities and differences in mental ability as well as different learning rates.[33] Standardised academic testing and uniform educational standards too easily dismiss students as slow or disabled learners.[34] These uniform measures of ability do not, however, acknowledge a variety of specific skills and talents, which are just as valid and useful as life skills.[35] While some students are able to work within the framework of highly standardised processes, this method of measurement creates a very stressful working environment for many students.

In years past, young people could bypass school and make a decent living; however, in the current stream of academic standardisation as prerequisite to most sources of legal income, graduating from schools is virtually essential.[36] Schooling is seen by society as one of the basic thresholds, which every young person must cross, as they enter into the adult world.[37] From the adult perspective, the curriculum provides the fundamental knowledge needed to enter and contribute to communities, and the

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[31] Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood,* 318.

[32] Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood,* 319.

[33] David Elkind, The *Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2007), 50.

[34] Elkind, *Hurried Child*, 50.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Thomas Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager* (New York, NY: Avon Books, 1999), 139.

[37] Ibid.

additional activities provide an environment where young people explore their strengths and talents.[38] While high schools may often be criticised, they are very seldom challenged, as the population at large accept the fact that the high school experience is one of the basic rites of passage for adolescents.[39]

During the last decade in Australia, student attendance at public schools has been in decline. Since the year 2000, there has been a steady increase of students seeking independent schools as opposed to the public school system with the percentage increasing from 11 percent to 14 percent attending independent schools.[40] This trend indicates that the independent schools are perceived to be offering a better quality of education than their local public school. A national survey of Australian students also indicates that 17.3 percent are concerned about their school environment.[41]

Because of the high value placed on a good education, parents are questioning the systems and services schools are offering to students. More recently, the pressure to achieve at school in order to make the grade has led to higher stress levels amongst students.

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[38] Hine, *The Rise and Fall, 139*.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Australian Bureau of Statistics: *4221.0 - Schools, Australia, 2010* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010). http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/4221.0Main+Features42010?OpenDocument (accessed October 30, 2011).

[41] National Survey of Young Australians. *Insights into the concerns of young Australians: Making sense of the numbers, snapshot 2010* (Sydney, NSW: Mission Australia, 2010), 2. http://www.missionaustralia.com.au/downloads/national-survey-of-young-australians/2010 (accessed September 13, 2010).

Traditional values such as diligence, honesty, teamwork and friendship are being

compromised, as students must choose between their integrity and achieving top grades.[42]

Not only are these basic character traits compromised, but the workload is so demanding

that students are pressured to miss out on sleep, recreation and other areas of their social

life in order to achieve a good result.[43] While it can be argued that parents are not

responsible for the school curriculum, in many cases their expectations reflect the *ethos*

of the school in their desire to see their children succeed. This is a subtle form of

abandonment, due in part to the parents desire to see their children succeed. At a deeper

level though, parents have bought into the attitude that the value of their children is based

on their achievement, not their innate worth as individuals. Often students enter high

school not adequately equipped to deal with the workload, fall further behind and

experience alienation.[44] The cry of many students is that they will do whatever is needed,

to make it through the demands of their requirements at school.[45] Their education is seen

as a necessary means process, rather than a satisfying experience.[46] As one student

lamented, "People don't go to school to learn. They go to get good grades, which brings

them to College, which brings them the high paying job, which brings them to happiness,

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[42] Denise Clark Pope, *"Doing School" How We are Creating a Generation of Stressed Out, Materialistic, and Miseducated Students* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 4.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Fiona Stanley, Sue Richardson, and Margot Prior, *Children of the Lucky Country? How Australian Society has Turned its Back on Children and Why Children Matter* (Sydney, NSW: Pan Macmillan Australia, 2005), 77.

[45] Chap Clark, *Hurt: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 97.

[46] Ibid., 96.

so they think. But basically, grades is where it's at."[47] This comment reveals the coping mechanism that many students revert to in order to survive at school.

This is a sad response to the process that ideally would create a desire for learning, and deep thinking about the important issues of life. Adults however, continue to allow this systemic destruction of the imagination and intellectual capacities of their children. The fact is that adults, in their desire to see their children succeed, are allowing the education system to derail their children's innate value. However, the positive aspect is that the number of students entering universities in Australia has increased dramatically in recent years due to attendance through to year twelve. The number of students entering university has increased from 534 510 in 1991 to 695 485 in 2000.[48]

As the Australian standard of education is high by international standards, there is great demand from foreign students to enter Australian universities, which makes entry a competitive environment. In 1998, the number of students studying overseas had risen to 1.54 million and continues to grow.[49] So the demand for higher education will remain strong among Australian emerging adults. The multinational make up at tertiary institutions provides opportunities for mixing with a variety of other nationalities; however, this also creates tension. This tension will be discussed in the next section.

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[47] Pope, *Doing School,* 4.

[48] Brendan Nelson, *Higher Education at the Cross Roads: an Overview Paper* (Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth department of education, science and training, 2002), 8. http://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv13176 (accessed October 30, 2011).

[49] Ibid., 11.

Racism

Racism has been a reality in Australia ever since the country was colonised by the British first fleet in 1788.[50] The British introduced a new social class focused system to Australia based on the exploitation of hired or slave labour, the accumulation of material wealth and colonial individualism.[51] The Australian colonial history is littered with examples of indigenous dispossession of land, originally for pastoral usage and in more recent times for the mining industry.[52] Severe employment, familial and social restrictions have also been part of racist policy toward the indigenous population.[53] The racial environment has to a large extent been orchestrated by the Australian government, which instituted the "White Australia Policy," that made immigration into Australia exclusive to white Europeans.[54] Once the need for workers could be filled by European immigrants, the indigenous community was to a large degree relegated to remote pastoral employment deemed too remote for white workers.[55]

Due to a complex range of influences, the indigenous community has continually been neglected in many ways and is suffering from poor health by comparison with the

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[50] Mick Armstrong. "Aborigines: Problems of Race and Class" in *Class and Struggle in Australia Seminar Series* (Canberra, ACT: Australian National University, 2004), 1. https://digitalcollections.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/42696/2/Aborigines.pdf (accessed October 28, 2011).

[51] Ibid., 2.

[52] Ibid., 2-3.

[53] Ibid., 4-5.

[54] Myra Willard. *History of the White Australia Policy to 1920* (Melbourne VIC: Melbourne University Press, 1923, reprinted in London, UK: Frank Cass publishing Limited 1967), 17. http://books.google.com.au/books?hl=en&lr=&id=chuDflqWzlEC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=white+Australia +policy&ots=xbK4H6zHPb&sig=PSfqlJ7OWpPezSdXiIFfHNc13Uw#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed October 30, 2011).

[55] Armstrong, *Aborigines: Problems of Race and Class,* 3.

dominant white population.[56] Within the last decade there has been a comparative decline

in the living standards of Australian Aboriginals in education and jobs.[57] While there has

been sustained growth in the Australian economy, the proportion of full time and work

positions resulting from job-creation schemes has declined.[58] In addition, the rate of

participation of Aboriginals engaged in tertiary education declined significantly from

1996 to 2001.[59] There is a disproportionate lack of funding given to the indigenous

people of Australia in comparison with other groups.[60] According to a telephone survey

of residents in Queensland and New South Wales conducted in 2004, there is a persistent

level of intolerance against Indigenous, Asian, Jewish and Muslim Australians.[61]

Approximately one in four Australians have reported experiencing 'everyday racisms'

particularly among indigenous, those who speak languages other than English, those who

were not born in Australia (with the exclusion of NZ and the UK) and males.[62] It is fair to

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[56] Hugh Mackay, *Advance Australia ...Where: How We've Changed, Why We've Changed, and What Will Happen Next* (Sydney, NSW: Hachette Australia, 2007), 18.

[57] Armstrong, *Aborigines: Problems of Race and Class,*1.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Boyd Hamilton Hunter, Yohannes Kinfu and John Taylor*, The future of Indigenous Work: Forecasts of Labour Force Status to 2011'* (Canberra, ACT: Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, Discussion Paper 251/2003), pp. 7, 10: Boyd Hamilton Hunter and R.G. Schwab *Practical reconciliation and recent trends in Indigenous education* (Canberra, ACT: Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian national University, Discussion Paper 249/2003), p. 4. http://caepr.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/Publications/DP/2003_DP251.pdf (accessed October 29, 2011).

[60] Mackay, *Advance Australia,* 19.

[61] Kevin M Dunn, *Racism in Australia: Findings of a Survey on Racist Attitudes and Experiences of Racism* (Canberra, ACT: National Europe Centre the Australian National University, 2004), 1. https://digitalcollections.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/41761 (accessed October 28, 2011).

[62] Ibid.

say that racism is an issue of concern within the Australian community, and measures have been taken by some to rectify this problem.

In an attempt to bring healing to the indigenous population, the Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, officially apologised for the mistreatment of the 'Stolen Generation' of children, who were confiscated from their parents and placed in 'Missions' for re-education.[63] This inhuman treatment of indigenous children is a dramatic example of adolescent abandonment by the dominant white culture within Australia. While the stealing of children was finally outlawed, there still are widespread negative attitudes towards indigenous Australians in many adult circles. Racism is not confined to the indigenous population, but is also displayed to other races that have migrated to Australia. Since the early 1990s, Australia has experienced a continued torrent of media panics and racist attacks against Arabs, Muslims and refugees.[64] Indeed racism is mostly seen as a static feature of Australian society.[65] Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Australian government, in conjunction with the media, provoked anti-Muslim and anti-Arab attitudes.[66]

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[63] Kevin Rudd, "Sorry Speech to Australian Parliament," *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney, NSW: John Fairfax Holdings Ltd, 2008), 1. http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/02/13/1202760379056.html (accessed October 28, 2011).

[64] Rick Kuln, *The Rise of Anti-Muslim Racism in Australia: Who Benefits?* (Canberra, ACT: Humanities research Centre Australian national University, 2007), 3. https://digitalcollections.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/45034 (accessed October 30, 2011).

[65] Ibid*.,* 3.

[66] Ibid*.,* 7.

Since the abolition of the White Australia Policy in 1973, the number of Lebanese and Turkish immigrants has created a much larger Australian Muslim population.[67] Due to the continued need for workers, immigration to Australia is increasing, with 27 percent of Australians born overseas in 2010.[68] The annual net population growth from migration into Australia has increased from 142 500 in 2004-2005 to 215 600 in 2009-2010.[69] As many of the migrants are from Muslim countries, the population of Muslims taking up residence in Australia has increased from 200 885 in 1996 to 340 392 in 2006 making Islam one of the fastest growing religious groups in Australia.[70] Migrants of other religious persuasions are also altering the Australian social landscape; however, due to several factors Muslims have received more media attention than other religious groups. Racism in Australia has generally been fostered by the capitalist class, public policy and migration legislation in order to serve those in positions of power.[71] For the average working class Australian, the multicultural nature of society adds richness and a

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[67] Kuln, *The rise of anti-Muslim,* 7.

[68] Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australia's Diverse Population: International Comparison* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010), http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/0D5A016809789E35CA2578B0001195B1?opendocum ent (accessed October 30, 2011).

[69] Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Net Overseas Migration 1009-10.* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010), http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/6C6FF8866984E656CA2578B0001196A4?opendocum ent (accessed October 30, 2011).

[70] Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Religious Affiliation (a) by Age for Time Series* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006), http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/ABSNavigation/prenav/ViewData?action=404&documentproductno=0 &documenttype=Details&order=1&tabname=Details&areacode=0&issue=2006&producttype=Census Tables&javascript=true&textversion=false&navmapdisplayed=true&breadcrumb=TLPD&&collection=Ce nsus&period=2006&productlabel=Religious Affiliation by Age - Time Series Statistics (1996, 2001, 2006 Census Years)&producttype=Census Tables&method=Place of Usual Residence&topic=Religion&; (accessed October 30, 2011).

[71] Kuln*, The rise of anti-Muslim,* 19.

cosmopolitan element to urban life. For many emerging adults, the political arena is of little consequence and global culture is fast becoming the norm.

The social realities listed above serve as a window into contemporary Australian society. While there are areas of concern, it must be noted that overall there is a sense of positivity among emerging adults who are on the move and are embracing the multi-cultural ethos in their world. The significant levels of poverty, homelessness, family breakdown, the education system and racism are some of the influences that demonstrate how adult based systems have negatively impacted emerging adults. There are other influencing factors, which are beyond the scope of this essay; for example, public policies on employment, finances and the penal system also demonstrate adult neglect of the psychosocial needs of many emerging adults. But for the purposes of this essay focus will be on issues that families and the church can address. It is important now to discuss how these influences have impacted the Adventist emerging adult community. The discussion will now shift from the broader community context and focus on the Australian face of the Seventh-day Adventist Church community.

CHAPTER 2

CURRENT CONTEXT OF AUSTRALIAN ADVENTIST EMERGING ADULT
MINISTRY

In order to describe the current context of Australian Adventist emerging adult

ministry, an analysis of the demographics and characteristics of the average Seventh-day

Adventist local church needs to be surveyed. The Seventh-day Adventist denomination in

Australia in 2009 consisted of 415 recognised churches and 83 informal companies.[1]

Therefore, the total number of recognised Adventist congregations in Australia is 498.

This represents a wide variety of fellowship groups from large church congregations

situated in capital or regional cities to remote informal companies in small rural

settlements. The total membership in Australia in 2001 was 50 696[2] although not all of

the calculated members were attending on a weekly basis, as membership is based on

registered membership lists. The actual attendance throughout Australia in 2001 was

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[1] Les Relihan, *Secretaries Statistical Report – Annual* (Sydney, NSW: South Pacific Division Administrative Headquarters, 2009), 3.

[2] Office of Archives and Statistics, *139th Annual Statistical Report* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2001), 28. http://www.adventistarchives.org/docs/ASR/ASR2001.pdf#view=fit (accessed November 23, 2010).

estimated at 36 600, which represented 72 percent of the total membership.[3] This figure is significantly higher than a more recent survey conducted in 2008, which revealed the total attendance across the nine conferences in Australia was 30 775.[4] With a total membership in 2008 of 55 010, this represents only 55.9 percent who attend regularly.[5]

There is also a huge variance between conferences[6] with average local church membership ranging from 68 to 134 and attendance rates ranging from 45.2 percent to 76.2 percent as Table 1 reveals. The reasons why these differences exist are complex and are beyond the scope of this ministry focus paper. However, anecdotally there are subtle influences that affect church attendance. For example, the pastor plays an important role in either attracting or disenfranchising members. Another significant issue is the proximity of employment or tertiary institutions for those wishing to engage in furthering their education. The quality of the worship experience is also worth noting, as many more rural churches have limited human resources to work with in providing a quality worship experience.

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[3] National Church Life Survey, *Media Release - 28th February 2004* (Sydney, NSW: Mission Australia, 2004), http://www.ncls.org.au/default.aspx?sitemapid=2106 (accessed November 24, 2010).

[4] South Queensland Conference, *Seventy-Fourth Triennial Constituency Meeting 21-22 August 2010* (Brisbane, QLD: South Queensland Conference, 2010), 38-39.

[5] Office of Archives and Statistics, *147th Annual Statistical Report—2009* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2009), 26.

[6] The Australian Adventist church is divided up into regional 'conferences' with local administration offices who supervise the employment and programs within these geographical areas. There are nine conferences that comprise the whole Australian territory, namely: Western Australia (WA), South Australia (SA), Tasmania (TAS), Victoria (VIC), South New South Wales (SNSW), Greater Sydney (GS), North New South Wales (NNSW), South Queensland (SQ) and Northern Australia (NA). Most boundaries coincide with state borders with the exception of New South Wales which is split into three conferences and North Queensland which is shared with the Northern Territory. http://spd.adventistconnect.org/site_data/90/assets/0001/3658/SPD_map.pdf (accessed October 23, 2011).

Table 1. *Membership, Average Congregation Size and Attendance Rates by Conference: February 2008.*[7]

Conference	Membership Start 2008	Churches/ Companies	Average Congregation Membership	Attendance 28/2/2008	Attendance Percentage
GS	8417	70	120	6412	76.2
NNSW	10602	79	134	4807	45.3
NA	2228	33	68	1065	47.8
SA	2895	35	83	1292	44.6
SNSW	2618	36	73	1604	61.3
SQ	10663	86	124	7205	67.6
Tas	1151	17	68	520	45.2
Vic	9473	88	108	4789	50.1
WA	5471	50	109	3081	56.3
Total	53518	494	108	30775	57.5

Attendance figures may vary depending on the particular weekend the survey was conducted, however, the significant contrast between official membership of 53 518 and actual attendance of 30 775 as table 1 highlights, needs to be examined further. Seventh-day Adventist church membership in Australia increased gradually with membership in 2009 recorded at 55 010.[8] This figure corresponds closely with the 2006 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census, which states that there are 55 251 people in Australia who claim to be affiliated with the Adventist church.[9] Based on the total number of members attending recognised churches and companies across Australia, the average attendance at

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[7] South Queensland Conference, *Seventy-Fourth Triennial Constituency Meeting, 39* and Office of Archives and Statistics, *146th Annual Statistical Report* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh day Adventists, 2001), 26. http://www.adventistarchives.org/docs/ASR/ASR2008.pdf#view=fit (accessed November 24, 2010).

[8] Office of Archives and Statistics, *147th Annual Statistical Report* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh day Adventists, 2009), 26. http://www.adventistarchives.org/docs/ASR/ASR2009.pdf#view=fit (accessed November 23, 2010).

[9] Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Cat. No. 2068.0 - 2006 Census Tables 2006: Census of Population and Housing* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/9BAACC26CC709706CA25729E0008A88F ?opendocument (accessed September 25, 2011).

any given local church was approximately 109 in 2009.[10] There are however, larger church congregations in the capital cities with a membership of over 600,[11] but these are in the minority in comparison to the average sized congregation nationwide.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, several significant Adventist church attendance patterns emerge as outlined in Table 2. While there has been a steady increase in church attendance from 1996 through 2006, this increase has not been uniform across all age groups. 0 through 34 age groups (highlighted in bold font) all experienced losses, while the 45 through 85+ age groups experienced gains. The age group from 35 through 44 seems to be switching from growth to decline as seen by the bolded 2006 census figure. There is a very clear pattern of declining numbers of younger members attending a local church in contrast to consistent growth across the older age groups. These trends combined create an overbalance of older members in comparison to younger members. These trends will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

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[10] Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population.*

[11] The following churches have memberships of over 600: Springwood, (Brisbane), Wahroonga (Sydney), Lilydale (Melbourne), Avondale Memorial, Avondale College church (Cooranbong) and Livingston (Perth).

Table 2. *Trends in Seventh-day Adventist church Attendance by Age.*[12]

Year	Australian Adventist Church Attendance by Age								
	0-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	85+
1996	**11360**	**7955**	**7344**	7365	6424	4507	3968	2763	969
2001	**10989**	**7596**	**7111**	7432	6962	5099	3968	2899	1182
2006	**10903**	**7553**	**7054**	**7405**	7139	6128	4416	3274	1379

In addition to the consistent pattern of decline in the younger age groups, it is also significant to note that there are more young males opting not to attend church than females. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics as outlined in Table 3 below, from the ages of 15 through 85+, there are less males (highlighted in bold font) attending Adventist churches than females. This disproportionate number of males opting out of church attendance also needs further research; however, that study is beyond the scope of this ministry focus paper.

Table 3. *Trends in Seventh day Adventist Church Attendance by Age and Sex.*[13]

2006	Australian Adventist Church Attendance by Age and Sex								
	0-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	85+
Male	5453	**3579**	**3173**	**3301**	**3178**	**2685**	**1904**	**1296**	**435**
Female	5453	3975	3875	4102	3963	3444	2514	1978	943

By contrasting the official church membership with the average weekly attendance in Australia, then comparing the age breakdowns across the age span, it becomes clear that church attendance is in decline within the younger membership range.

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[12] Australian Bureau of Statistics, *2006 Census Tables: 20680-Religious Affiliation by Age - Time Series Statistics (1996, 2001, 2006 Census Years)* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006), http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/ABSNavigation/prenav/ViewData?action=404&documentproductno=0&documenttype=Details&order=1&tabname=Details&areacode=0&issue=2006&producttype=Census Tables&javascript=true&textversion=false&navmapdisplayed=true&breadcrumb=TLPD&&collection=Census&period=2006&productlabel=Religious Affiliation by Age - Time Series Statistics (1996, 2001, 2006 Census Years)&producttype=Census Tables&method=Place of Usual Residence&topic=Religion&; (accessed November 24, 2010).

[13] Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Religious Affiliation by Age by Sex*. (accessed November 24, 2010).

With the additional comparison that clearly demonstrates the disparity between male and female attendance in Table 3, the need to focus on caring for the needs of young males in particular is urgent. These statistics underscore the need for an increased intentionality in how older adults relate to emerging adults within the local church. While attendance is one measure of church engagement, there are several other influences that affect emerging adult attitudes toward the Adventist church.

The number of field local church pastors employed in Australia as of 2009 was 318,[14] which averages out among the 498[15] congregations at just fewer than two congregations per pastor. In rural areas this may mean up to three smaller congregations supervised by one pastor. Under these circumstances, a pastor will rotate around the congregations preaching regularly in each church and chairing the board and business meetings. In the larger church congregations in urban contexts there may be several pastoral staff assigned to one congregation, based on membership and tithe contributions made to the local conference administration. Obviously the churches with more pastoral staff will be in a better position to implement more competent ministry training in many areas of church life. However, in rural areas where the pastor has several churches to care for, the amount of training and mentoring is diminished.

Considering the age breakdown of emerging adults in local churches, statistics from the Western Australia (WA) Conference highlight a significant imbalance. The age breakdown of Adventist emerging adults, particularly between the ages of 15 to 45, is far

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[14] Les Relihan, *Secretaries Statistical Report – Annual,* (Sydney, NSW: South Pacific Division Administrative Headquarters, 2009), 1.

[15] Ibid., 3.

below the state population average for the same age.[16] For example, in Western Australia, 16 percent of the total population are youth aged 15 through 24, whereas within the Adventist church, the same age group forms only 11.5 percent of the membership.[17] The figures are similar for the next age bracket being 25 through 34, who constitute 16 percent of the total population, but only 10 percent of the Adventist church membership.[18] These statistics confirm the results in Table 2, showing a decline in attendance in Adventist congregations. This age group is underrepresented within the church in comparison with the general population. In the North New South Wales (NNSW) Conference, the figures are similar with the 13 through 18 year age bracket constituting 5.7 percent[19] of the total Adventist church membership, compared with the same age bracket constituting 8.1 percent of the total New South Wales (NSW) population.[20] However, when comparing the 19 through 30 year age bracket, the NNSW Conference proved to have a better than state average with this age group comprising 21.9 percent[21] of the membership as opposed to the NSW population of that age only

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[16] West Australian Conference, *Annual Report 2010* (Perth, WA: West Australian Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2010), 5. http://wa.adventist.org.au/assets/268808 (accessed November 23, 2010).

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] North New South Wales Conference, *Church Census 2002-2003* (Newcastle, NSW: North New South Wales Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2003), 1.

[20] Australian Bureau of Statistics, *3201.0 Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories TABLE 1.1 Estimated Resident Population By Single Year Of Age, New South Wales* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003), http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3201.0Jun%202008?OpenDocument TABLE 1.1 Estimated Resident Population By Single Year of Age, New South Wales – Revised (accessed March 28, 2012).

[21] North New South, *Church Census,* 1.

constituting 16.2 percent.[22] This illustrates the variance between conferences within the Australian church.

The Adventist church in Australia is also multicultural, with 19 ethnic congregations meeting in the South Queensland (SQ) Conference alone.[23] These ethnic congregations create community for emerging adults who identify with minority language groups living in Australia. Language groups in the SQ conference such as Croatian, Fijian, Romanian, Korean, Serbian, Samoan and Spanish[24] offer community to migrants who are looking for a sense of security and nurture. These churches often also experience faster growth, with 5 of the 7 Samoan churches in the SQ conference experiencing growth of more than 20 percent in the last 3 years.[25] This growth in the multicultural presence of the Adventist church is a trend that needs to be highlighted as there are both positive and negative elements for emerging adults who wish to engage in a faith journey. Having considered the ethnic minorities within the Adventist church in Australia, other minority groups also need to be mentioned.

Another minority group worth discussing is country churches with small congregations that are disadvantaged in several ways.[26] Due to a lack of educational or

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[22] Australian Bureau of Statistics, *3201.0 Population by Age and Sex,*

[23] South Queensland, *Triennial Constituency Meeting,* 42.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] In order to distinguish urban churches from rural churches, I have made the distinction based on two main criteria. Firstly, churches in communities with less than 50,000 total population are considered rural. Secondly, churches situated more than one hour drive from the nearest university or large employment opportunity, are considered rural. Some churches may be in smaller communities; however they are less than one hour drive from a major university and or employment opportunity. I have also based my analysis on the South Queensland Conference Session report for 2010, as well as census data

work options in rural areas, many youth leave so as to obtain education and employment.[27] The average local church membership in rural areas is dramatically less than the average urban church. For example in the NNSW Conference, the average rural church membership is 61[28] and the average SQ conference rural church attendance is 80.[29] In comparison, the average church membership in urban areas in NNSW conference is 249[30] whereas the average urban church membership in SQ conference is 188.[31] While these statistics represent only two of nine conferences in Australia, it is fair to argue that the demographic of most other conferences will be similar with the exception of the Greater Sydney (GS) conference, which is almost totally urban. These figures provide valuable insights into the membership limitations in many rural churches. They also provide the context for further discussions on the reasons why many Adventist emerging adults choose to locate elsewhere.

Another element of the Australian church demographic that needs to be highlighted is the process of election of church officers. Due to financial limitations, the pastor is the only paid staff member in most local churches. All other officers are

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from the North New South Wales Conference 2002-2003, as well as 2004. Recognising the data on the church locations is from different years, the location of churches remains the same.

[27] South Queensland, *Triennial Constituency Meeting,* 42

[28] North New South Wales, *Church Census,* 1.

[29] South Queensland*, Triennial Constituency Meeting, 39*-41.

[30] North New South Wales, *Church Census,* 1.

[31] South Queensland*, Triennial Constituency Meeting, 39*-41.

volunteers who are elected on an annual basis.[32] This process of annual election creates an environment where officers plan and view their role as a short-term position. This short-term thinking has negative implications for building longer-term relationships with emerging adults.

In addition to the annual election of officers, the programmatic structure of the Adventist church also conforms to a fairly stable format as outlined in the Adventist Church Manual.[33] Due to the reliance upon documents like the church manual, there is in many churches a fairly uniform structure and understanding of how these programs are to be conducted, which lessens the spontaneity and creativity that many emerging adults thrive on. Particularly in smaller rural churches, the availability of personnel is limited to a few adults who are willing to take one or more offices during any given year. Without adequate training and equipping, these officers are unprepared for the challenge of providing quality programs for emerging adults.

In conclusion, the demographic of the Australian Adventist Church has been briefly outlined with emphasis on the decline in regular attendance to 57.5 percent, contrasted with the apparent growth of official church membership.[34] Coupled with declining attendance, is the significant variation in size of local church congregations between rural and urban settings. This impacts more severely on rural churches, where smaller congregations are less able to fill all available ministry roles, necessitating individual members taking on several ministry roles at once. This reality in many

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[32] The Secretariat, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual 16th Rev ed.* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 47.

[33] Ibid., 67-92.

[34] South Queensland, *Triennial Constituency Meeting,* 42.

churches may add to the dramatic decline in attendance from age 0 through to 34, as seen in Table 2. The increase of ethnic churches is a positive feature of the Australian Adventist Church; however, there may also be negative influences that are worth attention. In addition to the issues mentioned above, the annual election of officers combined with rigid programming outlines has created a stale environment in many churches, which stifles relational ministry. With this information in mind, the next section of this chapter will focus on how youth ministry in structured and what programs currently exist in Australia for Adventist emerging adults.

<p style="text-align:center">Typical Youth Ministry Structure and Programs in Place</p>

The Australian Adventist Church has a rich heritage of effective youth ministry and is seen by other divisions of the world church as an innovative country. However, there are some inherent flaws in current youth ministry structures and programs, which will now be discussed. At the local church level, Adventist youth ministry in Australia has traditionally been divided up into three major age ranges. These age-based ministry programs, or clubs as the first two are called, are supported within each conference by a youth departmental team. Each Youth Department is usually comprised of at least one "Youth Director" and a "Youth Secretary" who provide resources and materials for local church based ministries. Each ministry area has a set curriculum with teaching resources and awards, which are recognised and developed by the world headquarters, called the General Conference, based in Washington DC, USA. The General Conference Youth Department mission statement is as follows: "The primary focus of youth ministry is the salvation of youth through Jesus Christ. We understand youth ministry to be that work of

the church that is conducted for, with, and by young people."[35] Youth ministry therefore is conducted at all administrative levels of the Adventist church in order to facilitate this end goal.

Adventurer Ministry

For the purposes of this research project, the age group represented by Adventurer ministry will only be discussed in brief, as the age group represented does not fall within the parameters of the emerging adults demographic. The youngest age group the youth department has responsibility for is the 4-year Adventurer program for children ranging in ages from 6 to 9 years.[36] The Adventurer program is based on regular meetings conducted on a Saturday afternoon for the four age groups, with a basic curriculum of activities and bookwork. The program is built around four themes focusing on the following: My God, My Self, My Family and My World.[37] The aim of the Adventurer program is to facilitate spiritual, social and physical growth in a balanced range of activities. The activities are age appropriate and are designed to facilitate the holistic growth of the children.

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[35] The Secretariat, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, 47.* .

[36] Department of Church Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, used by permission. Re-edited by the South Pacific Division Youth Ministries committee, *Adventures in Living A Resource Manual for Families and Adventurer Clubs* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992, Reprinted 2001), 16. http://adventurers.spdwebministry.org/site_data/80/assets/0000/3715/ad_all.pdf (accessed November 25, 2010).

[37] Ibid., 3.

Pathfinder Ministry

The second age-based program, called Pathfinders, has a 6-year program designed

for children ranging from ages 10 to 15years.[38] Similar to the Adventurer program, the

second age-specific level of ministry is the Pathfinder program, which consists of church

based meetings with a combination of nature-based recreational activities, social events,

spiritual disciplines and life skill development project work.[39] The Pathfinder program is

designed to facilitate the transition through early to mid-adolescence. Adolescents

negotiate the task of individuation in a setting where they are mixing with peers as they

engage in adult supervised activities.

Involvement in Pathfindering impacts youth positively as demonstrated by the

Valuegenesis study conducted in Australia and New Zealand in the mid-1990s. Youth

who were involved with Pathfinder ministry responded with a 40 percent greater

likelihood of developing a high level commitment than those who were not involved.[40]

Through involvement in Pathfinder ministry, many young Adventists develop a stronger

relationship with the denomination as well as registering a greater level of importance on

religious faith.[41] In many respects, Pathfinder ministry is the strongest structured program

that has continued to remain functional, with over 90 percent of Pathfinders who

responded to the survey indicating that they would still remain active church members by

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[38] South Pacific Division, *Pathfinder Staff Manual, Organisation Drill Honours 4th ed.* (Sydney, NSW: Church Ministries Department, 1996), 1.

[39] Ibid., 3, 69, 126-178.

[40] A. Barry Gane, *Valuegenesis Project Report No 3, Youth Ministry and the Transmission of Beliefs and Values* (Cooranbong, NSW: Avondale Academic Press, 1997), 74.

[41] Ibid., 75.

age 40.[42] These two junior-age programs provide the foundations for the next level of youth ministry.

Senior Youth Ministry

The third age level is classed as Senior Youth Ministry, which is a broad term for ministry to adolescents aged 16 through to 30 years.[43] Currently there are only two official courses available for training in local church youth ministry. The first is the "Master Guide" (MG) course[44], which focuses on spiritual, social, intellectual and physical development of adolescents aged 16 and older. The Master Guide program involves hands-on youth ministry in a variety of settings, developing skills useful in youth ministry and required reading in areas related to adolescence and ministry. The second course is the "Youth Leadership Award"[45] (YLA), which also focuses on a similar blend of practical skills, hands-on involvement in specific areas of youth ministry and required readings. These courses are basically two forms of discipleship development that Conference Youth Departments offer to adolescents who desire to become involved in local church ministry.

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[42] Gane, *Valuegenesis Project Report*, 76.

[43] South Pacific Division Youth Ministries Committee, *Youth Ministry: Leadership Development in the Local Church* (Sydney, NSW: South Pacific Division Department of Youth Ministry, 1990), 3. http://youth.adventistconnect.org/site_data/93/assets/0001/4183/1-TableofcontentsTheologyandPhilosophyofYouthMinis.pdf (accessed November 25, 2010).

[44] Adventist Youth Ministries, *Master Guide* (Sydney, NSW: South Pacific Division Department of Youth Ministry, 2009), http://pathfinders.adventistconnect.org/site_data/86/assets/0024/9223/Master_Guide_Record_Book.pdf; (accessed October 24, 2011).

[45] Adventist Youth Ministries, *Youth Leadership Award Criteria and Diary* (Sydney, NSW: South Pacific Division Department of Youth Ministry, 1992), http://youth.adventistconnect.org/document_groups/415 (accessed September 21, 2011).

Conference Youth Departmental Ministry

Conference based Youth Department personnel offer support to local churches in several ways. Firstly, the Youth Department offers training to local Adventurer, Pathfinder and Senior Youth leaders through a series of training weekends conducted annually. These training opportunities are provided to introduce local church appointed leaders to the basic information needed to conduct local church ministry to young people. Some of these training programs are recognised by the government as they have work health safety implications regarding working with children and outdoor activities.

The Conference Youth Departments also offer a variety of ministry opportunities for adolescents and emerging adults who wish to assist in Conference sponsored programs. There are ministry programs offered by the Conference Youth Departments that emerging adults may attend or become staff members at. These programs are usually offered during school or university holiday breaks and provide valuable opportunities for leadership development and spiritual growth.

One of the more successful ministries for senior youth is the annual running of Storm Co[46] trips.[47] These programs have become a rite of passage for many youth within the Adventist church in Australia and have consistently aided in the spiritual growth of

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[46] Jerry Unser, *Storm Co Journal* (Sydney, NSW: South Pacific Division Department of Youth Ministry, 2010) http://stormco.adventistconnect.org/assets/237514 (accessed November 25, 2010).

[47] Storm Co Short term service trips provide adolescents with a relatively cheap option for service within their state or region. The programs will often be hosted over an extended week during school holidays, involving a children's variety program and community service. Storm Co is built on five foundations: No Agenda, No Expectations, No Walls, No Limits, No Fear. For more information see: http://stormco.adventistconnect.org/about-us

team members.[48] The typical Storm Co program consists of a group of high school students travelling to a remote country town in Central Australia and conducting programs for indigenous children and communities. Storm Co ministry provides emerging adults with opportunities to experience service to others, which often has a dramatic impact on those who have not been accustomed to working with less privileged children.

Another ministry opportunity offered by the Conference Youth Departments includes becoming a staff member of summer camp programs offered over the school holidays.[49] Summer camp staff often build strong mentoring relationships with younger adolescents during these events, with very effective outcomes. The Youth Department Director and Secretary also build networks with staff and act as mentors once a relationship is created. These relationships between staff and the Conference Youth team are long lasting and offer emerging adults a meaningful relationship with a mature adult who mentors them in ministry to youth.

Both Storm Co and summer camp ministries are specific to school holidays, as are most of the Conference ministry events. The Conference Youth Department teams offer these ministry events in an attempt to develop ministry skills for emerging adults. However, there are limitations with these programs as they are only offered at strategic

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[48] Several testimonial web sites provide insights into the spiritual value of this ministry, for example: http://www.kellyville.org.au/content/view/96/135/; http://www.nnswyouth.com/stormco/stormco_about.html; http://www.sqyouth.org.au/about-storm-co

[49] All Australian conferences offer a summer camp program emerging adults can volunteer as staff. This is a regular feature for many emerging adults who wish to engage in ministry to other adolescents. Several youth department web sites feature this ministry: http://www.sqyouth.org.au/ ; http://www.sydneyadventistyouth.com.au/ ; http://www.nnswyouth.com/f_summercamps.htm

times throughout the calendar year. Youth Department programming is meant to compliment local church programs; however it is at local churches that many emerging adults suffer from a lack of intentional ministry opportunities.

Local Church Youth Ministry

Local churches often build ministries around the weekly church service, which consists of a segmented program beginning with a time of scriptural study followed by a combined worship service for the entire congregation.[50] These church worship events serve as the hub for all other local church activity. Other programs conducted on either Friday night, Saturday afternoon or Saturday evening are coordinated by the elected youth leader and their youth committee.[51] The local church serves as the primary location for spiritual faith development, with varying degrees of effectiveness.

The Youth Ministries Committee plans and coordinates youth activities on the same annual basis as all other elected church offices. The main programs conducted by the youth committee are a blend of spiritual and social events, with an outreach program of some kind planned usually once per year.[52] The more common spiritual event would involve fellowship and a devotional message with some form of worship. While there is value in meeting together regularly, unless there is some growth element this kind of event can lose meaning and focus. However, there are a large portion of local churches

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[50] The Secretariat, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 71-72, 88.

[51] Ibid., 102-3.

[52] I have selected a few churches with active youth programs as a reference to illustrate the better youth programs offered in healthy churches in large cities. Kellyville and Parramatta churches in Sydney: http://www.kellyville.org.au/content/view/344/210/ ; http://parramatta.adventist.org.au/youth-ministry

that don't really have any strategic plans for spiritual growth over the long term. They tend to rely on the Conference Youth Department teams to provide structure for the youth.

In conclusion, the local church youth ministry structure is relatively unstructured in most churches. While the Conference Youth Department teams do provide leadership development opportunities and ministry events, these programs only act as a support network for many local churches, where adolescents are often left to their own devices for the remaining weeks where there is no conference program offered. While the Master Guide program and Youth Leadership Award are still active and functional, many emerging adults have not chosen to engage in these structured programs. There are some local church youth teams who are well trained and are conducting excellent ministries for emerging adults, however sadly this would not be the norm across all local churches in Australia.

Lifestyle Norms for Adventist Emerging Adults in Australia Today

Australian emerging adults are highly educated, technically aware and are willing to be inspired and directed. The most recent academic analysis conducted on Australian and New Zealand Adventist emerging adults was conducted in 1997, and there have been some significant social changes since that time. However, for the purposes of this project, some statistical results from that study will be provided to gain an insight into some of the major lifestyle norms in Australia. The Valuegenesis: Youth Adult Study focused on adolescents aged 19 to 25,[53] which is the same target audience as specified in this project.

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[53] Strahan, *Valuegenesis,* 5.

The process of selection was by random stratified sampling of 209 churches in Australia and New Zealand.[54]

A total of 728 questionnaires were returned into data files for processing.[55] The survey was designed to measure emerging adult responses in four specific areas. These areas were: Religious Belief and Practice, Participation in At-Risk Behaviours, Overall Adjustment and Experience of Abuse.[56] The first three specific areas have relevance to this ministry focus paper. Regarding religious faith and belief practice, the respondents affirmed their belief in the biblical account of creation, the ongoing authority of the Ten Commandments, the return of Christ, the state of the dead, and significance of the seventh-day Sabbath.[57] This implies that the central beliefs have been successfully transmitted to this age group.[58] Other doctrines were less well understood or accepted, for example, 65 percent of those who responded agreed that God wanted obedience "more than anything else".[59] As a possible result of this focus on obedience, over one third of respondents reported that God seemed silent and remote when they felt a need for him.[60]

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[54] Strahan, *Valuegenesis,* 5.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid., 4.

[57] Ibid., 21.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid., 23.

[60] Ibid.

Regarding attitudes toward the local church, 43 percent disagreed that their local church was open to any new ideas,[61] while 40 percent disagreed that their local church encouraged them to ask questions about their faith.[62] Regarding the perception of the pastor's interest, 33 percent disagreed that he or she was interested in them. In addition, 32 percent of respondents felt that their local youth leader did not know them well.[63] Overall 40 percent of respondents indicated that they had either left the church or had thought about leaving at some point. The reasons for leaving are included in table four in ranked order.

Table 4. *Rank ordered list or reasons for leaving the SDA church.*[64]

Reason for Leaving the SDA Church	% Agree
I perceived adult members as living phony lives	64.4
I think the church placed too much emphasis on non-essentials	64.2
I found the attitudes of older church members to be critical and uncaring	61.7
Church leaders were preoccupied with organisation and not sufficiently interested in people	58.5
I found the worship services to be dull and meaningless	57.8
I did not want to be a hypocrite	56.6
I felt the church was too restrictive	53.8
I was attracted to a different lifestyle	51.9

The fact that 40 percent of emerging adults had considered leaving the church is cause for alarm and places responsibility on mature members to be intentional in fostering relationships with younger members. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the number of Australians who have any affiliation with religion has dropped

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[61] Strahan, *Valuegenesis,* 49.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid., 53.

from 74.9 percent in 2001 to 70.1 percent in 2006.[65] This is a dramatic decline in a five-year period, which portrays a rapid shift away from identification with formal religious institutions. Coupled with this trend is the rise in the number of Australians who claim to have no religious affiliation from 15.5 percent in 2001 to 18.7 percent in 2006.[66] These trends combined appear to demonstrate a dramatic increase in scepticism in the broader Australian population toward religion. There are an alarming number of people who have, for various reasons decided that they no longer see religion as a viable part of their lives.

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[65] Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Table 1 Other Areas of Social Concern, National Summary, 1998–2009 cat. no. 4102.0, Australian Social Trends, Data Cube – Other areas of social concern. Released 30 June, 2010* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010). http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4102.0 (accessed November 19, 2010).

[66] Ibid.

PART 2

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR AN EMERGING ADULT MINISTRY OF
ADOPTION

In order to develop an appropriate theology of the church as a platform for

emerging adult ministry, a brief review of Adventist theological heritage needs to be

discussed. Relevant biblical texts portraying Paul's relationship with the Thessalonian

church and Christ's relationship with his disciples will then be examined in order to

refocus the orientation of emerging adult ministry. A brief discussion will follow on the

role of the Holy Spirit who empowered the early believers as they began their missional

activities. Finally, these relational models of the early church will then be applied in the

context of the local church so as to provide models for effective nurture for emerging

adults.

Adventist Theological Heritage

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, as the name suggests, has placed particular

emphasis on two themes that are somewhat distinctive. The first of these, being the

keeping of the seventh day of the week holy as the Sabbath, and the second being the

second advent of Christ to redeem His people. These dual themes were considered

noteworthy as they distinguished the small group that became Seventh-day Adventists from other Protestant denominations of the time.

The first theme to be considered is the soon return of Christ in his glory.[1] This focus on the coming, appearing or return, *παρουσια, επιφανεια* oρ, *ελθω*, of Christ mentioned 27 times in the New Testament[2] remains a central theme in Adventist thinking.[3] The coming of Christ, or *παρουσια*,, mentioned in Mt 24 and elsewhere in the New Testament[4] has created a sense of urgency and expectancy in Adventist youth ministry[5] programming and emphasis.

The twenty-fifth statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs stipulates that, "The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel."[6] As stated, the second coming of Christ presents the future with

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[1] Neufeld F. Don, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* Revised ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1976), 1307.

[2] The references are as follows: (Mt 16:28, 24:3,27,30, 37, 39; 26:64;Mk 13:26, 14:62, Lk 21:27, 1 Cor 15:23, 1 Thess 2:19, 3:13, 4;15, 5:23, 2 Thess 2:1, 2:8; 1 Tim 6:14, 2 Tim 4;1, 8; Tit 2:13, Jms 5:7, 8; 1 Pet 1:7; 2 Pet 3:4, 12; 1 Jn 2:28).

[3] Neufeld, *Adventist Encyclopedia,* 1307.

[4] The following biblical references comprise the main texts used for an understanding of Adventist thinking on the Second coming of Christ. (Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:7; Matt. 24:43, 44; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:8; Rev. 14:14-20; 19:11-21; Mark 13; Luke 21; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 1 Thess. 5:1-6.)

[5] The term "Adventist Youth Ministry" is well known within Adventism and stands for the Adventist Youth Departments role in local churches.

[6] Seventh-day Adventist fundamental beliefs statement number twenty-five which states, **"Second Coming of Christ**: The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel. The Saviour's coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. When He returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die. The almost complete fulfillment of most lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ's coming is imminent. The time of that event has not been revealed, and we are therefore exhorted to be ready at all times." Http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html (accessed May 25, 2010).

hope as Christ returns to take his chosen people home to his Kingdom with him. This moment in time is seen as the climax in a great controversy between the forces of good and evil. Therefore the παρουσια represents the long awaited climactic consummation of redemptive victory, in which Christ returns as a king to finally harvest the earth (Rev 14:14-16; 19:11-16; 22: 7,12-14,20) and take his people with him into the heavenly realms.

This focus on the return of Christ, and the need for every member to assist in the preaching of the Gospel to the whole world (Mt 24:14), continues to dominate Adventist thinking. This apocalyptic focus has affected the philosophy of youth ministry as well. The emphasis has been primarily on spreading the Gospel to the world as the name "Missionary Volunteers" (MVs) suggests.[7] The General Conference Youth Department aim is, "The Advent message to all the world in my generation."[8] This specific end time focus has created a very mission oriented youth ministry. Mission has driven the agenda of youth ministry since the church began with much of the training aimed at soul saving and developing skills to share one's faith. An early Adventist thought leader, Ellen White, described the role of Adventist Youth in fulfilling the mission of the church as follows:

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[7] General Conference Youth Department, *Church Heritage Manual* (Washington, DC: General Conference Youth Department, 2002), 58. http://pathfinders.adventistconnect.org/document_groups/4136 (accessed October 26, 2010).

[8] General Conference Youth Department, *Youth Department Aim* (Washington, DC: General Conference Youth Department, 1985). http://gcyouthministries.org/Ministries/AdventistYouth/AimMottoPledge/tabid/173/Default.aspx (accessed May 25, 2010)

"With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained… how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world. How soon might the end come?"[9] This statement typifies the strong mission focus in early Adventism that still permeates Adventist thinking today. As the Adventist church grew from its origins of small groups of believers in the northern states of America 150 years ago into a worldwide denomination, the apparent delay in Christ's return has raised questions about this focus. However, in mainline Adventism, the imminent return of Christ still plays a major role in youth ministry thinking and programming.

The second theme to be considered revolves around the other identifying mark of the remnant church, obedience to God's Commandments. The apostle John states: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Rev 12:17 KJV)[10] The pivotal concept in this verse revolves around the notion of a last day remnant people who obey the commandments of God, including the fourth, which requires the observance of the seventh day Sabbath, Saturday. This focus on keeping the commandments has dominated Adventist thinking since its inception.[11] The Sabbath

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[9] Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students Regarding Christian Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913), 555.

[10] Holy Bible, King James Version, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1975). All subsequent biblical references will be taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version (New York, NY: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993).

[11] Seventh-day Adventist fundamental beliefs statement Number Twenty, "The Sabbath: The beneficent Creator, after the six days of Creation, rested on the seventh day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation. The fourth commandment of God's unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another. It is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom. The Sabbath is God's perpetual sign of

doctrine has impacted youth ministry in terms of the programming and time frame within

the week. Paul Tomkins, Trans-European Division Youth Director, states, "on a regular

Sabbath anywhere around the world, you can expect to find at least two of the following:

Sabbath school, divine worship, and AY meetings."[12] Both Sabbath school and Adventist

Youth (AY) society meetings were established to keep youth actively engaged in

religious activities during Sabbath hours. It is the norm in most Adventist churches

worldwide for youth to meet at Sabbath school for biblical study and discussion. The

local church based AY society serves more of a social interactive function; however,

service and outreach may also feature as part of the program.

Engagement of youth in Sabbath school was initiated in 1852 with the publication

of the "Youth Instructor" magazine, which provided scriptural lessons for youth as well

as acting as a guide for ministry initiatives. [13] The Youth Instructor became the primary

youth ministry tool in early Adventism by providing a curriculum for Bible study as well

as other religious education.[14] This magazine has been replaced by the Sabbath school

youth lesson pamphlet, which is published and distributed worldwide on a quarterly

basis. It would be fair to say that in some churches the youth lesson pamphlet is not used

as much today due to the rising variety of online resources. However, the Sabbath school

His eternal covenant between Him and His people. Joyful observance of this holy time from evening to evening, sunset to sunset, is a celebration of God's creative and redemptive acts."
http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html (accessed May 25, 2010).

[12] General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Youth Department, *Getting It Right, a Power-packed Resource for Adventist Youth Leaders* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005), 383.

[13] George R. Knight, *Organising to Beat the Devil: The Development of Church Structure* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2001), 32-3.

[14] George R. Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists* 2nd ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2004), 76.

class has remained a central aspect of youth programming and spiritual nurture for

Adventist young people worldwide.

The Adventist church has promoted and supported the Sabbath school as a major

forum for youth ministry, with a number of study journals published for worldwide

distribution. More recently the church has become aware of and has incorporated some

mainline youth ministry resources from other youth ministry organisations like Youth

Specialties and the Doug Fields' "Purpose Driven"[15] model of youth ministry. Exposure

to a variety of mainline youth ministry resources has had a positive impact on Adventist

thinking over the last twenty years, as the emphasis has created a more balanced attitude

toward the unique needs of emerging adults. The South Pacific Division Youth

Department vision statement has now incorporated Doug Fields' five purposes of youth

ministry into its core ministry objectives.[16]

Whereas the traditional ministry focus was primarily on faith sharing, with the

view of hastening the advent of Christ, the current youth ministry core ministry

objectives statement includes worship, discipleship, fellowship, faith sharing and

service.[17] By adding the ministry objectives listed above, it is recognised that other

elements are essential in building mature Christian disciples. Despite the recent trend

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[15] Doug Fields, *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry: 9 Essential Foundations for Healthy Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998).

[16] Ibid., 46.

[17] Adventist Youth Ministries, *Core Ministry Objectives* (Sydney, NSW: South Pacific Division Department of Youth Ministry, 2006). http://youth.adventistconnect.org/vision (accessed December 4, 2011).

toward a more holistic focus in Adventist youth ministry, the problem of emerging adults leaving the church remains a major disappointment to parents and ministry leaders.

Recognising there have been very successful Adventist young adult ministry programs and structures in place since the 1950s, and in particular during the last twenty years, several issues have continued to hinder effective youth ministry at the local church level. The problem of aging leadership in many local churches, and a lack of understanding and intentionality towards emerging adults on the part of many local church leaders, has resulted in large numbers of emerging adults disengaging from the church in Australia.[18] In order to establish an effective long-term ministry to emerging adults, the focus must shift from a programmatic structural focus towards a ministry model based on intentional relationships. There are some excellent biblical references that illustrate the intentional relationships between the believers in the early church. It is to these examples that the discussion will now engage.

Paul's Parental Analogy

Scripture is rich with excellent examples of intentional nurturing relationships between leaders and disciples that inform emerging adult ministry. Firstly, in his letter to the Thessalonian Christians, both paternal and maternal imagery is used to portray the loving relationship that existed between Paul and his Thessalonian children. Paul first alludes to the maternal depth of his concern when he says, "We were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children" (1 Thess 2:7).[19] Paul's care and concern for

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[18] Barry Gane, *Youth Ministry and the Transmission of Beliefs*, 62; 98-9.

[19] Holy Bible, New International Version (New York, NY: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993).

the Thessalonian believers is the same as dynamics displayed in the family home, where a mother gently guides and directs the thoughts and actions of her children in ways that are for their best. He then clarifies his relationship with more intimate terms when he says, "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us."(1 Thess 2:8). Paul openly confesses that he has shared not just the Gospel, meaning the truths of scripture, but his life journey, his core being, his identity in Christ. This relationship has become so dear to him that he sees himself in the role of mother to the Thessalonian children in Christ. Amidst the preaching, teaching and fellowshipping with the believers, his heart of love is moved beyond the casual formal adult peer-to-peer dynamics, but enters the deepest levels of human concern. Paul then alludes to the paternal elements of his concern.

Paul states, "For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory" (1 Thess 2:11-12). Here Paul reflects upon his relationship with the believers in Thessalonica in terms of a father and child. He encourages, comforts and urges the Thessalonian church in ways that are synonymous with the loving care a father would provide for his children. This level of intimacy displays the mentoring, nourishing elements of a helper who is striving to develop younger members of a family. This relationship goes beyond a professional information-based scenario, by relating at levels of intimacy formerly known in families only. Paul's task as an evangelist included knowing his flock intimately as well as teaching scriptural truth. This kind of intimacy endeared the early believers to trust him as he spoke about

Christ and salvation. His care and concern for them continued after he had left them physically, as he continued to communicate as a senior family member. Here is a fine example of how younger church members were nurtured and mentored into a mature understanding of God's love, as Paul exemplified intimate levels of care and guidance. Paul also recognised his role was not to replace the nurturing role of Christ through his Spirit. What Paul modelled was a practical example that is replicable in contemporary ministry to emerging adults. Paul's intimate relationship with the Thessalonian church offers insights into one of the core foundations of ministry to emerging adults. The intimate relationship born of the Spirit yearns for inclusiveness, affirmation and supporting strength of a larger family, in fact the family of God.[20] As the church models loving relationships in all areas of ministry, the faith community will help to provide families a stable spiritual foundation.[21] The impact of this kind of nurture upon emerging adults is positive and assists in their spiritual formation process as they see authentic community lived out in real ways. Paul's intimacy is but a reflection of the love displayed by Christ, to which the discussion will now turn.

Christ's Friend Analogy

The second biblical illustration is based on the relationship between Jesus and those he was closest to. Jesus portrayed this same intimacy with his disciples. When he invited several of the group to "Come, follow me… and I will make you fishers of men" (Mk 1:17), he was in fact inviting them into a close family relationship. The Gospel

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[20] Gilbert Bilezikian, *Community 101: Reclaiming the Local Church as Community of Oneness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 177.

[21] Ibid.

accounts of the life of Christ and his disciples reveal the deep level of intimacy that he nurtured and developed while he travelled through Israel and Judea. As these men were led by Christ, his intimate love and compassion transformed their lives. As they lived and ministered with Christ, their understanding of the compassion of God was completely altered. They saw in Christ, one who embodied a love that was unknown to them. In the process of accompanying him through months of ministry, they became family to the extent that he refers to this group as his mother and brothers (Matt 12:46-50; Mk 3:31-35; Lk 8:19-21). Their relationship with Christ was so intimate that he thought that mother and brothers best explained the shared experience.

Jesus also spoke in very familiar terms to his disciples, imploring them to, "'Love each other as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). Christ spoke in intimate terms of love in order to underscore the high unconditional regard they needed to have for one another. He modelled the kind of intimacy that he expected of his followers, and challenged them to extend this level of commitment to the others they would later witness to. His relationship was of a high moral standard, which was the exception to the rule of his day.

Christ also distinguished his disciples from the status of servants saying, "I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" (Jn 15:15). The self-disclosure Christ modelled for his disciples typifies the levels of intimacy that should become the hallmark of the community of faith. Christ clearly enunciated this model when he declared, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (Jn 13:34-5). There was to be an attitude of trust and transparency between believers that would break down the societal and cultural

barriers. By his familiar treatment of the disciples, Christ modelled the kind of intimacy that can and should typify the entire community of faith.

This brief biblical summary of the relationship between Paul as an apostle to the Thessalonian church, and Christ with his disciples, provides a useful model for the deep relational foundations that should undergird the faith community in all local churches. Mature leaders need to offer friendship, support, nurture, encouragement and instruction to the younger members of the faith community in order to facilitate spiritual growth. It is through quality ongoing relationships with mature members of the local church, that emerging adults will gain the depth of support they need to mature spiritually.

New Testament Family Analogies

The New Testament is rich in describing the church and is not limited to one metaphor; however, if there is one metaphor that does appear repeatedly, it would be the family.[22] The reference to various modes of family are evident in several letters and include "the family of believers" (Gal 6:10), "the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom 8:29), "members of God's household" (Eph 2:19), "like new born babies, crave spiritual milk" (1 Pet 2:2), "Treat your younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters" (1 Tim 5:1-2), and "I write to you dear children, because you have known the Father" (1 Jn 2:12-13).'[23] In fact, Paul uses the term "brethren" more

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[22] Frank Viola, *Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity: Reimagining the Church* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008), 98.

[23] Ibid., 98-9.

than 130 times in his pastoral letters.[24] The family metaphor accurately depicts the closeness and care that the believers shared and that Christ embodied in the early church.

Christ is the head of this family, and as such he emptied himself completely, to the extreme of death, in order to display his love.[25] As Christ pours out his Spirit in his family, its members also are to empty themselves in service for the family. It is the Spirit of Christ that brings the family together with one spirit looking after one another's interests.[26] Christ's attitude of servanthood toward his family remains the pattern for all who take up the role as leaders in the church family today. It is through the Spirit of Christ that the natural traits of a functional family are displayed. The traits that characterise Christ's family would include care for one another's needs and burdens.[27] Christ's family would also spend quality time together in order to get to know each other at a more intimate level than is experienced at church gatherings.[28] Christ's family would show affection toward one another in appropriate ways that reveal the level of intimacy that has developed.[29] Christ's family would also grow to the point where it may multiply or divide in order to facilitate new family members.[30] Christ's family was meant to grow, and if the conditions are right it will grow both internally/spiritually and

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[24] Viola, *Pursuing the Dream, 98-9*.

[25] Neil Cole, *Organic Leadership: Leading Naturally Right Where You Are* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 200.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Viola, *Pursuing the Dream,* 100.

[28] Ibid., 102.

[29] Ibid., 105.

[30] Ibid.

externally/numerically.[31] In order for the family of Christ to reach it fullness the function and presence of the Holy Spirit must also be considered.

The Work of the Spirit

These character traits of Christ's family, the church, will only exist if the Holy Spirit is the sustaining and energising force behind all church family life.[32] The care, concern and affection displayed by Christ's family toward one another will only become a reality when the Holy Spirit becomes part of that family. Any spiritual growth will only come when the family members have invited the presence of the Spirit into their lives. The reality of God's reign in his family can only be revealed by the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit.[33] So in the midst of human life in all its brokenness, the Holy Spirit brings his adopted family into a new life in his church.[34] The church then as a family becomes an extension of God's love toward humanity. For the church to live as Christ intended it to, it must remain under the power of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The communal reality of mutual care and support, living holy lives that have been transformed by the Spirit and serving others in humility is what the New Testament terms the οινονια.[35] This new form of Spirit-led church family is then characterised by interdependence, collaborative sharing of responsibilities and mutual instruction for the

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[31] Viola, *Pursuing the Dream*, 106.

[32] Darrel L. Guder *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 142.

[33] Ibid., 144.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., 145.

benefit of the whole.[36] This kind of intimate family community is derived from the believers' union with Christ and quickened by a personal surrender to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This kind of community was established by Christ to be an organic people movement[37] that would be passed to the lives of others through organic networks of family, friends and those who interacted with their community. It must be mentioned that the covenant relationship between God and his church family is intensely personal.[38]

The kind of family community that Christ modelled and promoted was based on a personal relationship with each of the believers as the Spirit led. The early church leaders daringly thought about life in its entirety from the perspective of God's revealed will in Jesus.[39] They centred their thinking and practices on the incarnation as the starting point for God's purposes and intentions.[40] From this foundation the early church believers formed their understanding of Christian church and community. As they grew, they cultivated an environment that released Gods missional imagination in their lives.[41]

Thus the intimate family church model, established by Christ, is to become the modus of operation for church leaders as they continue to embody Gods missional purposes in a local church setting.

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[36] Guder, *Missional Church,* 146.

[37] Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos press, 2006), 54.

[38] Ibid., 55.

[39] Alan J. Roxbugh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping the Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 122.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

Theological Models of Effective Nurture for Emerging Adults

The family of God then becomes the missional community that is called to display the compassion, peace and justice that brings the reign of God to its members and others in the wider urban community.[42] Therefore in a practical sense, there is nothing in a believer's present life that cannot be brought under the authorship of God and used to benefit the younger members of the church family. So in his or her social interactions, the presence of Christ in the mature believer's life will impact the lives of those within their sphere of influence. The mature believer becomes the embodiment of Christ's teaching infused with power from the Holy Spirit.[43] The development of the early Christian church survived because Christ lived in and through the believers who embodied his message.[44] In the same way today, those who wish to effectively mentor emerging adults must embody the Gospel and become Christ to those whom they wish to impact in spiritual ways.[45] Christ's word must penetrate deeply into their soul in order for them to implant the Gospel in the lives of the emerging adults under their care.[46]

In summary, Christ modelled an intimate friendship with the disciples who became the embodiment of his message and initiated a new community of faith. Paul similarly nurtured the Thessalonian community of believers, but in a parental manner, displaying the same intimacy authenticated by the presence of the Spirit in their lives.

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[42] Guder, *Missional Church,* 144.

[43] Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways,* 114.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Neil Cole, *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 64.

The family metaphor of the Christian community is beneficial as believers relate to each other in familiar terms, much like a loving family. As mature believers model their faith in ministry settings, they become like a parent to emerging adults. The relationship between mentors and those being trained brings intimacy and trust into the life of the younger believers. The relationship between Christians enables the Holy Spirit to impress God's missional purposes upon the minds of the younger believers. Through these relationships, young believers develop faith and a mature understanding of their personal role in God's redemptive plan for his church.

However, there are other facets of ministry to emerging adults that contribute to effective mentoring of emerging adults. For ministry to emerging adults to be effective, study must be given to theological, psychosocial, environmental, contextual, cultural and programmatical factors as well as the biblical examples provided above. In order for mature leaders to be effective in ministering to the needs of emerging adults, a process of analysis is beneficial.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYTICAL TEMPLATE FOR EMERGING ADULT DISCIPLESHIP FOR
AUSTRALIAN ADVENTIST CHURCHES

Effective ministry to emerging adults must take into account the factors

mentioned above. The next section of the discussion focuses on an analytical template

that has been designed to highlight significant considerations that leaders in churches

need to address when ministering to emerging adults. The model illustrated in Figure 1,[1]

serves as an example of the kind of analytical template that is helpful in determining what

factors need to be considered as leaders attempt to minister effectively.

This template serves to assist leaders in understanding the key elements of

effective emerging adult ministry. From this vantage point, emerging adult leaders can

assess the validity of any ministry program and ensure that it is effective in reaching the

goal of bringing emerging adults to spiritual maturity.

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[1] The Analytical Template illustrated below was designed by students in the Fuller Doctor of
Ministry Cohort in March 2010. The contributing students were: Nick Kross, Kelly Lashly, Lance
Bourgeois & Kris Fernhout. The group does not suggest this template to be comprehensive however it has
the elements of analysis that were considered of value to the group.

Figure 1. *Analytical Template for effective Youth Ministry*[2]
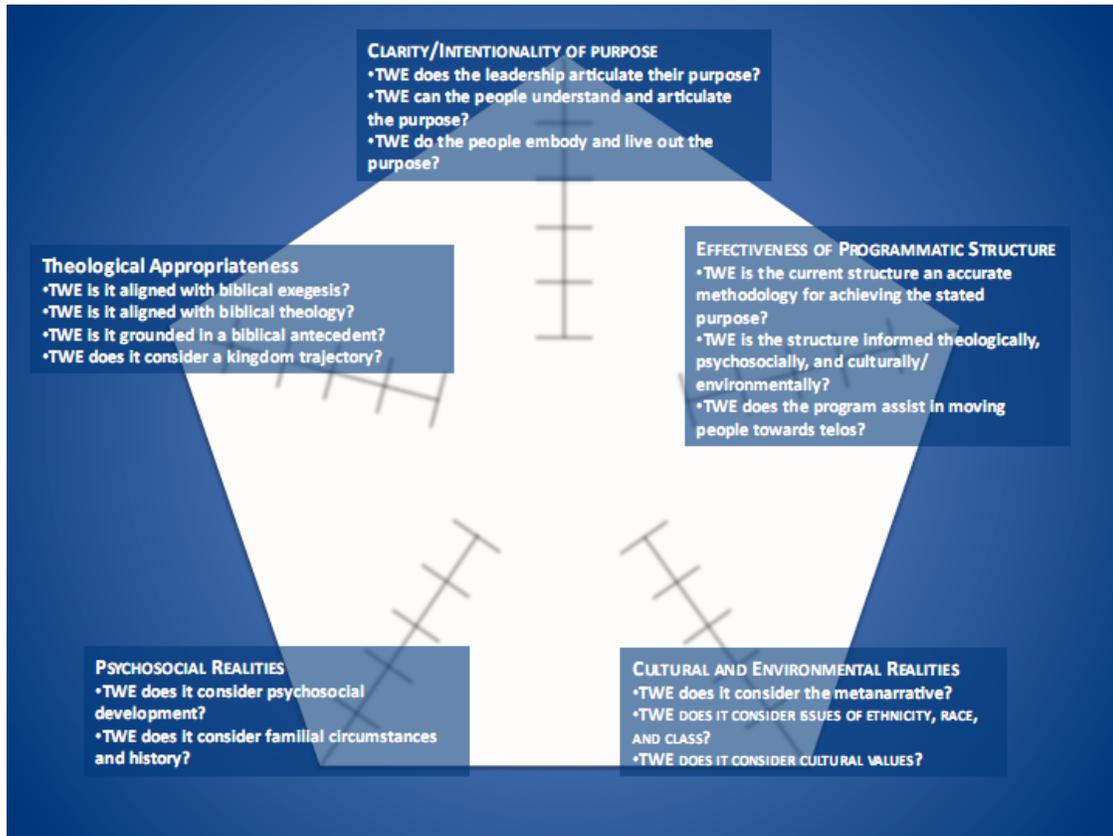
The core elements for analysing the effectiveness of emerging adult ministry will be discussed next. The process of analysis is useful as it will enhance the process of spiritual adoption of late adolescents and emerging adults into the heart of the church body.

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[2] Note 1: The purpose of the analytical template is to act as a gauge by which several elements of effective Youth ministry can be measured according to what extent the youth ministry program meets the current needs of the youth. The five areas are represented in the five corners of the pentagon with incremental indicators directed toward the center. To the extent that the ministry meets the needs of each of the youth in each of the factors highlighted, the score will be entered on the scale from 1 *(1 being toward the outside of the pentagon)* being the least effective, through to 5 *(5 being close to the center of the Pentagon)*, which is the most effective. Note 2: The questions listed in each of the five elements of effective youth ministry can be posed either in writing or verbally, with the score being entered along each corresponding continuum. This visual graph will display to what extent each element has been achieved. Note 3: The abbreviation (TWE) introducing each question stands for: To What Extent.

As part of the doctorate in youth and family life cohort, analytical templates for

effective youth ministry were developed by class student groups. This template was

designed to analyse various models of youth ministry and provide an objective way of

assessing the elements of effective ministry models. A diagram of the template is

illustrated in Figure 1, highlighting the core components that need to be analysed in order

to ascertain the effectiveness of a youth ministry model. There are vast differences in the

manifestation of God's living community, depending on a multitude of sociological,

cultural and theological factors.[3] The purpose of an analytical template for youth ministry

praxis is to assist local church leaders to heed the unique call God has placed on that

particular church community.[4] While there are several popular models of youth ministry

that contain valuable principles and foundations, it is neither possible nor advisable to try

and recreate a replica of ministries that are effective in other contexts.[5]

The purpose of an analytical template is to allow emerging adult leaders to

evaluate a given model of youth ministry, push beyond the notion of what works

elsewhere, and think analytically about the goal of their youth ministry.[6] The template's

purpose is also for emerging adult leaders to undergo prayerful consideration and

theological reflection as they plan to fulfil God's calling in their lives.[7] This analytical

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[3] Chap Clark, "The Myth of the Perfect Youth Ministry Model" in *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry,* ed. Kenda Creasy Dean, Chap Clark, and Dave Rahn (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 109.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

template provides a framework for thinking through the historical, cultural and theological issues that make up the faith community they are ministering within.[8] The outcome of this analytical thinking process will give the emerging adult leader a deeper understanding of what they are trying to achieve and how they will achieve their end goal. The ideal would be for a young adult leader to develop a model of ministry that is informed by history, culturally appropriate, theologically sound and caters for the needs of the young adults being ministered to. It is quite likely that a model of youth ministry will begin to emerge as a result of this analytical thinking, however, the process of analysis will isolate elements within the existing model that need further consideration and modification. The end result will hopefully be a more relevant and effective ministry as a result of the process.

The analytical template, in Figure 1, includes five separate elements that need to be considered in order to develop an appropriate and informed youth ministry model. Within these five separate elements there are some specific questions that address various aspects of each element. The five elements are as follows: clarity and intentionality of purpose, theological appropriateness, psychosocial realities, cultural and environmental realities and effectiveness of programmatic structure.

Each of these elements will be explored in detail in the following paragraphs, which will enable the reader to understand the need for each element.

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[8] Clark, *Myth of the Perfect Youth Leader,* 110.

Clarity and Intentionality of Purpose

At the outset, young adult leaders must be able to define their purpose as leaders of young adults. It is only as the purpose becomes clear that any program or event has meaning. This mission statement must be broad enough to encompass all strategies, programs and structures of the ministry.[9] The purpose or mission statement must provide the rationale for what is done.[10] Several questions have been developed, which help to identify the understanding of the purpose statement at both leadership and attendee levels of ministry. The questions are designed to help establish the level of clarity that both leaders and young adults have in understanding the purpose of the ministry. The three questions are: To what extent does the leadership articulate their purpose? To what extent can the people understand and articulate the purpose? To what extent do the people live out and embody the purpose?

From these questions, the leader should be able to ascertain the level of understanding that exists among both leaders and young adults in the group. If both leaders and young adults can clearly articulate, understand and embody the purpose statement, then it could be assumed that there is a good level of intentionality and clarity in the given purpose statement. Clarity of purpose is a core element of any effective ministry.[11]

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[9] Clark, *Myth of the Perfect Youth Leader*, 114.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Fields*, Purpose Driven,* 55-7.

Theological Appropriateness

For any young adult ministry to be effective in providing long-term spiritual growth, it must be grounded in an appropriate theological foundation. This element of the analytical template is pivotal if the ministry is to be effective in changing lives in a redemptive way. Defining an appropriate theological rationale for ministry is foundational to an effective ministry practice. Youth ministry falls into the category of practical theology, as it applies God's activity within the redemptive ministry of humankind. [12] Don Browning defines this type of theology as, "the reflective process which the church pursues in its efforts to articulate the theological grounds of practical living in a variety of areas such as work, sexuality, marriage, youth, aging and death."[13] In order for a theology to be appropriate, it must first be relevant to the current situation.

So in the terms set out by Browning, this reflective process of articulating the theological foundations of the lives people live in a given community of faith, an appropriate theology of youth ministry should emerge. This is an important task for leaders who seek to understand and contextualize scripture, tradition and current praxis in order to transform the lives of emerging adults.[14] Several questions have been supplied to highlight the elements of an appropriate theology of youth ministry. These questions are listed below: To what extent is it aligned with biblical exegesis? To what extent is it

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[12] Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 24

[13] Don S. Browning, *The Moral Context of Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1976), 14.

[14] Anderson, *Shape of Practical Theology,* 24.

aligned with biblical theology? To what extent is it aligned with biblical antecedent? To what extent is it aligned with biblical trajectory?

From these questions, leaders will gain direction and insight into the issues involved in developing an appropriate theology of youth ministry to emerging adults. If the theology is to be appropriate, it must be grounded and aligned with a thorough exegesis of relevant texts. These texts will undergird any theological statements or understandings of youth ministry. They must also be informed by any biblical antecedents in order to fall in line with the major themes of scripture. Finally, an appropriate theology must consider the biblical trajectory as prompted by the spirit. Only after these questions have been considered and answered will young adult leaders be in a position to provide an appropriate theology of emerging adult ministry. Youth ministry must be firstly a theological endeavour that seeks to inform both its content and practice.[15] All teaching, administration, relationships, and priorities reflect how God is portrayed, and how he has entered the lives of leaders.[16] Theology in its purest sense is developing a right understanding of the person of God.[17] The pursuit of a better understanding of the magnitude of God enhances one's desire to love and serve him. Theology then becomes a very useful start point for the practice of youth ministry. Rightly understood, theology inspires an ongoing critique of the knowledge of God.[18] As

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[15] Merton Strommen, Karen E. Jones and Dave Rahn, *Youth Ministry That Transforms: A Comprehensive Analysis of the Hopes, Frustrations, and Effectiveness of Today's Youth Workers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 209.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Richard R. Dunn and Mark H. Senter III, *Reaching a Generation for Christ: A Comprehensive Guide to Youth Ministry* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1997), 49.

[18] Ibid., 49.

ministry is primarily about relationships, an informed personal theology should serve to deepen and empower leaders to be more effective in their ministry to emerging adults.[19] Ultimately, ministry to emerging adults is not so much about techniques or programs. Ministry is at its peak when leaders see emerging adults through Jesus' eyes, perceive through Jesus' ears and understand with Jesus' heart.[20] Good theology enables leaders to reveal a new way of engaging the world, a new way of being in relationship with emerging adults.[21] It means being guided by the Holy Spirit in ways that transform our view of emerging adults from mere projects to be managed to people who need God's love.[22] In fact, the main fact of theology is the story of God, who dwells in humanity and offers comfort, sustenance, hope and the promise never to leave us.[23]

In summary, developing an appropriate theology of God and his love for emerging adults is vital. Only as they see God's love displayed through loving leaders will they in turn respond and commit their lives to his care. There are other key elements that also need to be considered to minister effectively to emerging adults. [It is to the psychosocial realities that the discussion will now focus upon].

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[19] Dunn, *Reaching a Generation,* 50.

[20] Mark Yaconelli, *Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 79.

[21] Ibid., 80.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Darrel W. Johnson, "Theological Framework for Youth Ministry: Redemption" in *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry,* ed. Kenda creasy Dean, Chap Clark and Dave Rahn (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 271.

Psychosocial Realities

The next element of analysis involves the psychosocial realities that are influential in any young adult ministry setting. For any youth ministry model to be effective, it must be informed by an understanding of the psychosocial and developmental stages of the young adults being ministered to. There are major differences in the needs of early adolescents as opposed to late adolescents and emerging adults: these considerations are of vital importance.[24] Several questions have been developed in order to assist young adult leaders in understanding the psychosocial realities they confront and attempt to address in their young adult group. Any effective leader will have to assess the ministry program in light of the following questions: To what extent does it consider psychosocial development? To what extent does it consider familial circumstances and history?

These questions are designed to highlight specific aspects of age appropriate ministry, which include psychosocial development as well as familial circumstances and history.

The first question alludes to the psychosocial transitions that emerging adults are adjusting to as they journey into mature adulthood. For many emerging adults, ecological transitions have become the norm, as they have completed their primary, secondary and in many cases tertiary education. In many western countries, emerging adulthood is a time of transition from adolescence into adulthood.[25] It is an age where emerging adults

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[24] Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging,* 13.

[25] Ibid., 13.

explore various work and relational possibilities; an age of identity exploration.[26] By the time the average person reaches emerging adulthood, they will have been exposed to many forms of human development. Bronfenbrenner asserts they will have a more extended, valid and differentiated conception of their ecological place in the wider environment.[27] He also states that the family remains the most stable enduring base for emerging adults.[28] This fact is significant, especially if parents are actively engaged in a positive church setting, as many emerging adults will rely on their parents for support and direction. Christian Smith summarises this point when he says, "Most adolescents …still very badly want the loving input and engagement of their parents"[29] Arnett provides several characteristics of this age that are helpful in understanding how emerging adults view life. He identifies emerging adulthood as an age of instability, self-focus, feeling in between, as well as an age of opportunity.[30] So from a psychosocial perspective, emerging adults are still in a state of transition, which needs to be considered in order to provide appropriate youth ministry strategies.

The second question highlights familial circumstances and history. Smith points out that emerging adults often report that their relationship with their parents has become closer, with stronger bonds of affection and understanding.[31] So in the majority

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[26] Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging,* 13.

[27] Urie Bronfenbrenner, *the Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* (Massachusetts, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 27.

[28] Ibid., 232.

[29] Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 284.

[30] Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging,* 14.

of families, emerging adults experience a decline in conflict as parents loosen their authoritative grip.[32] Arnett asserts however, that emerging adults who move out of home experience better relationships with parents than those who remain with the family at home.[33]

Smith has identified four "macro social" changes that, combined, have created another phase of life.[34] The four are summarised as: firstly, the dramatic increase in merging adults attending higher education.[35] Secondly, due to unprecedented levels of lifestyle freedom, emerging adults are delaying entering into marriage.[36] Thirdly, changes in the global economy that have replaced the traditional notion of entering into a life-long career, with a less secure work environment.[37] This shift has resulted in a psychological orientation toward emerging adults maximising work related options and postponing work commitments.[38] Fourthly, as a result of the previous points mentioned, many parents are increasingly inclined to offer financial support to their emerging adult children.[39] Arnett agrees with Smith, but also alludes to the fact that during this time of extended period of dependency, there are continual adjustments and adaptations that have

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[31] Smith, *Souls in Transition,* 43.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging,* 217.

[34] Smith, *Souls in Transition,* 5.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

to be made by parents and emerging adults in their relationship in order to reach their

goal of independence.[40] These adaptations and adjustments often involved stress and

conflict over the issues mentioned above. While these arguments may be beneficial, as

Arnett suggests,[41] the impact of conflict and stress on emerging adults can affect their

relationships with others. A number of people are important during this time of transition.

Other significant adults including teachers, employers and site officials can serve as

mentors at this time.[42] Church based leaders can also play a significant role for those

emerging adults who are engaged in their local church.

So in summary, there are some significant psychosocial and familial

considerations that need to be processed by leaders in order to provide appropriate

ministry to emerging adults. There are also broader cultural and environmental realities

that affect emerging adults. These will now be discussed.

Cultural and Environmental Realities

This element of the analysis involves the cultural and environmental realities that

influence the emerging adults being ministered to. Huge cultural shifts in society during

the last few decades of the 20th Century have created the complex fractured social fabric

of today's emerging adult.[43] The following questions have been provided to give

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[40] Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging,* 216.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Karin du Plessis and Tim Corney, "Trust, Respect and Friendship: The Key Attributes of Significant Others in the Lives of Young Working Men," *Youth Studies Australia* Vol 30, No 1 (Hobart, TAS: ACYS University of Tasmania, 2011): 18.

[43] Chap Clark, *Hurt: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 62.

emerging adult leaders focus when considering the cultural makeup of the group being ministered to: To what extent does it consider the metanarrative? To what extent does it consider issues of ethnicity, race and class? To what extent does it consider cultural values?

One of the basic human drives or needs is to find a place to fit in with others in their social group.[44] This need to fit into a larger picture or story is what can be called a "metanarrative".[45] It could also be expressed as a desire to feel comfortable in the presence of others of like mind.[46] In order for ministry to emerging adults to be effective, this desire to fit or be art of the metanarrative must be addressed. In order to fit in or feel comfortable, there must be an element of community within the group. Community is merely a collection of individual parts that combined make up the whole.[47] These individuals share similar experiences, values, norms, beliefs, traditions and ideals that help to define them as a group.[48] The individuals are shaped by the communities they live in and they often align themselves with the community they identify with.[49] An effective emerging adult leader will observe and study the culture of the community they are working with in order to be aware of the issues their youth groups are facing.[50]

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[44] Clark, *Hurt*, 63.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Steve Gerali, "Seeing Clearly: Community Context" in *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 287.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid., 286.

[50] Ibid., 287.

David Elkind, in his book, *Ties That Stress*, indicates that postmodern adolescents feel

victimised as a result of their needs not being met by parents or other traditional forms of

social support.[51] Adolescent social networks are shaped by the information technology

boom, remaining in continual electronic contact with each other.[52] Traditional leisure

activities like joining a sports team have gone from being social outlets into competitive

winning programs.[53] Another area of concern is education, with the focus shifting from

the holistic development of the student to tension between parents, teachers and

students.[54] Other issues like drugs, health, race and pop culture have created a disparity

between emerging adults.[55] These cultural influences affect the culture of young adults

and need to be considered by effective young adult leaders. Cultural influences will also

affect ministry programming as well, which is the final analytical criteria.

Effectiveness of Programmatic Structure

An effective programmatic structure will emerge out of, and be informed by, the

other elements of analysis. The programmatic structure needs to reflect a thorough

understanding of the purpose, theology, psychosocial, cultural and environmental

influences which impact young adults. Several questions have been posed for this

criterion, which will provide focus for a leader who wishes to be effective in

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[51] Elkind, *Ties That Stress,* 11.

[52] Mackay, *Advance Australia,* 6.

[53] Chap Clark and Dee Clark, *Disconnected: Parenting Teens in a MySpace World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 77.

[54] Ibid, 77-9.

[55] Bakari Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture* (New York, NY: Basic Civitas Books, 2002), xx.

programming ministry. These questions are mentioned below: To what extent is the

current structure an accurate methodology for achieving the stated purpose? To what

extent is the structure informed theologically, psychosocially, culturally and

environmentally? To what extent does the program assist in moving people toward the

telos?

For any programmatic ministry structure to be effective, leaders need to discuss

and address these questions. While programs have value by providing structure to youth

ministry, it must be recognised that their importance is secondary to relationships being

developed.[56] The end goal of any program is to bring people together with each other

and with God. Therefore, it is vital to a successful young adult ministry that programming

structure be intentional and informed by the other elements of analysis.[57]

Duffy Robbins alludes to the fact that there are several key elements in an

effective program, which include leadership development, nurture of the group and an

outreach component.[58] These elements combined offer a basic introduction to

programming, however there are other considerations that impact the effectiveness of a

youth ministry program. Doug Fields, in his landmark book, *Purpose Driven Youth*

Ministry outlines five characteristics of healthy youth programs: Programs need to put

relationships first. Programs need a fresh source of ideas. Programs need strength beyond

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[56] Fields, *Purpose Driven,* 137.

[57] Duffy Robbins, *This Way To Youth Ministry: An Introduction to the Adventure* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 509.

[58] Ibid., 485.

a personality. Programs need an ongoing follow-up system. Programs need clarification

of their purpose and potential audience.[59]

While Field's list of healthy programming characteristics is comprehensive, there

is still a strong emphasis on content and process as opposed to a relational basis from

which the programmed events grow. It is true that these characteristics include the fact

that in any program relationships must come first; however, there isn't any intentional

process of building intimacy between mature Christians and emerging adults as such. [60]

Building quality relationships with emerging adults has to be a high priority in

order to enhance the group's spiritual maturity.[61] Clark and Powell in their book, *Deep*

Ministry in a Shallow World, express the need for a less agenda-driven ministry program

than other structured systems in the lives of emerging adults.[62] The task for Clark and

Powell is to "help students hear God's voice and come home to him."[63] The focus on

building relationships that draw emerging adults to God is the focus of this essay.

The Analytical Template of Youth Ministry is a valuable tool for leaders who

wish to assess the effectiveness and validity of any youth program. It is hoped that the

information provided will be useful in the development of an informed view of effective

ministry to emerging adults. Once the process of analysis has been completed, leaders

will be equipped to evaluate the current ministry to emerging adults and have the

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[59] Fields, *Purpose Driven,* 194.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid., 195.

[62] Chap Clark and Kara E. Powell, *Deep Ministry in a Shallow World: Not so Secret Findings About Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 71.

[63] Ibid.

knowledge to design a contextually relevant and theologically appropriate ministry model. The ultimate aim of any ministry to emerging adults is to nurture them into the heart of the family of God, and to help them realise their God given role as a son or daughter of the most high.

PART THREE

MINISTRY STRATEGY

CHAPTER 5

A LOCAL CHURCH MINISTRY MODEL FOR EMERGING ADULTS

[In order to design] an effective model of emerging adult ministry, focus will be

placed on building intentional relationships with emerging adults. The process of mature

church members spiritually adopting younger members is of vital importance to the

spiritual welfare of emerging adults. Facilitating these mentoring relationships will

enable emerging adults to develop their spiritual identity within the faith community.

In order to develop an effective discipleship model of adoption for emerging

adults in a church setting, the elements of a mentoring relationship of adoption need to be

underscored. In this context, the term adoption refers to a situation where mature adult

church members and leaders demonstrate an intentional relationship of care and nurture

toward young adults within their sphere of influence. The term adoption in this context is

similar to the *Macquarie Dictionary* definition of adoption, which means, "To choose for

or take to one's self; make one's own by selection or assent."[1] The meaning is similar, in

that one or a number of adult church members choose to select a young adult by mutual

assent and create a special bond. This relationship would enable the younger member to

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[1] A. Dellbridge et al. *The Concise Macquarie Dictionary* (Lane Cove, NSW: Doubleday Australia, 1982), 28.

learn from and be exposed to the influence of the more mature church member. As Strommen and Hardel state, a "relationship established through being cared for and loved enables a child to trust people, believe in people, love people."[2] This same principle applies to the spiritual element of nurture as well. Faith in the divine is also nurtured as a result of God's initiative.[3] As stated in 1 John 4:19, "We love because He first loved us." Our ability to love springs from the knowledge of the Father's love for us.[4] In the same way that trust is developed in small children through the loving care of their mothers, faith in God can be nurtured through the loving care of an adult church member.[5] Those best able to offer faith development through a caring relationship are mature loving Christians within the context of a church family.[6]

There is a real need for those involved in youth ministry at local churches to recognise the need for nurture of emerging adults by peers and more mature adults. There is a need for training adults in the areas of mentoring, counselling and parenting of emerging adults.[7] There also needs to be training in peer-to-peer ministries to assist in the process of peer mentoring by emerging adults.[8] Emerging adults need a place where they

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[2] Merton P. Strommen, *Passing on The Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry* (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2008), 76.

[3] Ibid., 198.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 199.

feel secure, where they feel welcome and where they belong.[9] This place represents a

secure base from which they can engage in work and recreation with a sense of single-

mindedness and courage.[10] While it is recognised that the family system is the primary

place emerging adults identify as their place of security, there is a growing number of

emerging adults who cannot rely on their family for support. In these situations, the local

church may also play a valuable role in providing that place of welcome and security.

Young adults value a place where they are supported and feel free to explore issues they

face due to their faith.[11] They also require friendships built on strong faith values, as well

as needing to feel supported as they engage in the mission of the church.[12]

Emerging adults need genuine, nurturing, supportive relationships. Chap Clark

has developed a model of adoption that outlines the strategic process of incorporating

young adults into the heart of the church family. His model illustrates the most effective,

biblically based and appropriate model of youth ministry for a local church.[13]

This model, as outlined in Figure 2, represents the transition of emerging adults

from the outreach level through to full adoption into the church at large.[14] The benefits of

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[9] Diana R. Garland, *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 42.
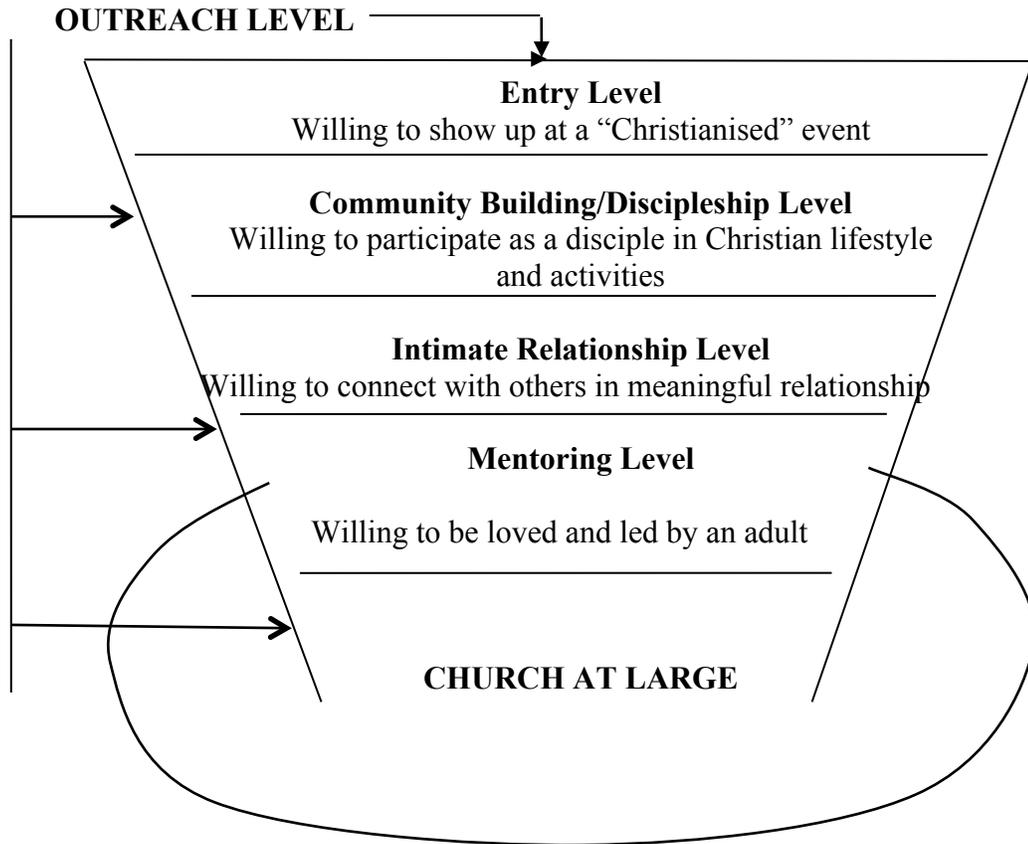
[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Strommen, *Passing on the Faith,* 199.

[13] Chap Clark, "The Myth of the Perfect Youth Ministry Model." in *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry*, eds. Kenda C. Dean, Chap Clark, and Dave Rahn (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan/Youth Specialties, 2000), 118.

[14] Ibid., 119.

this model will be discussed in depth, as it represents a mature process of long-term

spiritual growth through intentional mentoring relationships.

Figure 2. *Funnel of Programming*[15]

OUTREACH LEVEL

Entry Level
Willing to show up at a "Christianised" event

Community Building/Discipleship Level
Willing to participate as a disciple in Christian lifestyle
and activities

Intimate Relationship Level
Willing to connect with others in meaningful relationship

Mentoring Level

Willing to be loved and led by an adult

CHURCH AT LARGE

Entry Level

To clarify what is meant by the entry level of ministry, it must be stressed that, at

this level of ministry, the target audience may not even be interested in a church or

Christian environment.[16] Fields uses the term "community" to represent the same

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[15] Clark, *Myth of the Perfect Youth,* 118.

[16] Ibid.

demographic of those who do not attend church and who are living a life separate from Christ.[17] Robbins in contrast calls this group the "Pool of Humanity," emphasising the point that this group probably isn't even aware the ministry is present.[18] Clark asserts that in order to connect with this type of emerging adult, the focus will need to be on relationships, adventure, time, missional activity and relational investment, which typifies the kind of activity that may interest a totally uninvolved emerging adult.[19] For the purposes of this essay, the main focus will be on retaining emerging adults who are already attending church; however, there is value in discussing the role of this group in faith sharing as a part of their own spiritual growth journey. As Clark mentioned above, most of this type of ministry is conducted in an informal environment, which includes high levels of relationship investment and recreational activity. Many emerging adults will be immersed in the broader recreational setting; therefore it is vital that they see this setting as a potential evangelistic opportunity.

At the entry level, the focus will be on relevant, relational, Christ-centred, quality ministry events, which will involve emerging adult leaders spending time where emerging adults live and play.[20] Robbins asserts that this is the field where the seeds of the Gospel are planted by discerning youth workers.[21] It is vital to highlight that, at this relational seed planting level, evangelism is not a program but a process of a person

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[17] Fields, *Purpose Driven,* 91.

[18] Robbins, *This Way to Youth,* 500.

[19] Clark, *Myth of the Perfect Youth,* 119.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Robbins, *This Way To Youth,* 500.

modelling their transformed life to those who need God's saving grace.[22] In order to engage in the process of sharing God's saving grace, emergent adult leaders need to enter into the culture of the target group. This cultural immersion means to be plunged into, or saturated by, what affects emerging adults.[23]

Friendships are very important for emerging adults, especially for those who have left home and are unmarried.[24] Unmarried emerging adults spend time weekly with friends without any purpose, so the motivation is purely social.[25] Among the more popular activities emerging adults engage in are attendance at parties, bars, movies and music concerts.[26] These informal mixing activities are the natural places where emerging adults relax and socialise. It is in this environment that leaders will find opportunities to mingle with emerging adults and build friendships. It was into this environment that Jesus went with Matthew when he was invited to attend the party with Matthew's friends.[27] So using Jesus' style of bridge building, church leaders may need to explore new social contexts in order to retain connections with emerging adults. It is only by becoming immersed in this group that emerging adult leaders will build relationships with emerging adults. This relationship will then become the vehicle in the journey toward any form of real Christian community or Christ centred discipleship.

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[22] Fields, *Purpose Driven,* 104.

[23] Steve Gerali "Seeing Clearly: Community Context," in *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 288.

[24] Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging,* 250.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Neil Cole, *Organic Church*, 155.

Community Building/Discipleship Level

At the community building/discipleship level, ministry will focus on young adults who already have a genuine relationship with Christ but who desire a deepening of their faith.[28] Fields would include within this level the crowd, congregation and committed levels of ministry.[29] These levels of involvement in the life of the youth group represent growth as individuals become involved in small groups and are introduced to spiritual habits.[30] Similarly, Robbins refers to the following levels of ministry as: come, grow and discipleship levels of engagement with youth leaders[31]. Robbins implies that individuals at this level are willing to engage in Bible study and other forms of spiritual input as they take the initiative for their spiritual growth.[32]

As emerging adults build friendships within the church network, the process of attachment to other Christians begins to develop. It takes time to develop meaningful friendships and form solid attachments;[33] however, the benefits of those relationships will enable younger emerging adults to engage in the discipleship process. Robbins claims that the process of building disciples is an ongoing work or process that never really

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[28] Clark, *Myth of the Perfect Youth,* 120.

[29] Fields, *Purpose Driven,* 91.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Robbins, *This Way To Youth,* 500.

[32] Ibid., 502.

[33] Garland, *Family Ministry,* 44.

comes to full maturity.[34] However, the idea is that someone would partner with emerging adults as they head in the right direction.

Robbins points out that maturity really means appropriate maturity for one's age and stage.[35] The focus is not to produce totally mature Christians, but to journey with emerging adults as they find their ministry role and sense of place in the heart of the church. The aim of spiritual discipleship should be to bring emerging adults to the point where they display certain characteristics. Merton Strommen, Karen Jones and Dave Rahn have listed ten characteristics of young people who are committed to Christ. These young people will trust a personal Christ, understand grace and live in grace, commune with God regularly, show moral responsibility, accept responsibility in a congregation, demonstrate unprejudiced and loving lives, accept authority and responsibility, develop hopeful and positive lives, embrace the rituals of the Christian community, and engage in mission and service.[36]

This list represents the kind of qualities that leaders could focus on in the discipleship process. These character traits are not dependent on programs, although training and programs may play a valuable part in providing curriculum materials for the discipleship process. The aim here is to recognise that there are certain expectations that

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[34] Robbins, *This Way To Youth,* 447.

[35] Ibid., 448.

[36] Merton Strommen, Karen E. Jones and Dave Rahn, *Youth Ministry That Transforms: A Comprehensive Analysis of the Hopes, Frustrations, and Effectiveness of Today's Youth Workers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 130.

ought to be understood when nurturing the development of emerging adults.[37] It is also

recognised that no one person is able to educate or act as the sole role model. Every adult

has a responsibility to provide nurture, protection, affection and warmth in the

discipleship process.[38] The most effective way to help emerging adults is to surround

them with a choir of support and a chorus of commitment.[39] These discipleship

characteristics are signs of movement toward a mature faith based engagement with the

church as a whole.

For Clark, the focus of ministry for the community/discipleship group will be on

prayer, worship, intergenerational community, commitment and bible study, where a

sense of community and deepening levels of discipleship commitment are nurtured.[40]

Clark assumes that the fellowship events form part of the blend between the entry level

and community/discipleship level of engagement. The process focus is the transition from

initial attendance at a Christian ministry event, where an emerging adult's spiritual

awareness is just beginning to emerge, and the beginning of the discipleship process. As

community is developed and relationships become more intentional, faith awareness and

trust in Christ continue to grow. As the experience of community develops and the

relational levels deepen, emerging adults are ready for the next level of engagement

within the church.

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[37] Strommen, *Youth Ministry that Transforms,* 130.

[38] Clark, *Hurt,* 183.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Clark, *Myth of the Perfect Youth* 120.

Intimate Relationship Level

Clark's next level of engagement for emerging adults is intimate relationships, where the focus is on further development of the emerging adult's faith through accountability, warmth, intimacy, friendship and safety.[41] This level of ministry aims at those who are becoming future leaders of other emerging adults. It is at this level of ministry that Clark breaks from the thinking of Fields' and Robbins' models of youth ministry. For Clark, the focus remains on the continued growth and development of the individual, whereas Fields and Robbins turn the focus on the recruitment of other youth into their specific ministry programs.

For Fields, this is the core level of ministry.[42] Core level individuals are those who develop a passion for ministry and find opportunities to serve regardless of where God leads them.[43] Fields' main focus at this level is on aiding students in their discovery of their giftedness and directing them into various forms of ministry.[44] Robbins defines this level as develop and multiplier levels of ministry. His main focus is similar to Fields, which is on helping to develop the faith of others.[45] For both Fields and Robbins, the aim or end goal of ministry is the replication of the youth ministry program.

While the effective maintenance and growth of any ministry is important, this is not the end goal of effective ministry to emerging adults. It is at this point that Clark's

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[41] Clark, *Myth of the Perfect Youth,* 120.

[42] Fields*, Purpose Driven,* 91.

[43] Ibid., 173.

[44] Ibid., 173-80.

[45] Robbins*, This Way to Youth,* 502-3.

model redefines the aim and purpose of youth ministry. For Clark, the nurture and maturation process within each individual is of more significance than merely replicating or growing a ministry program. The aim, for Clark, is to continue to develop significant mentoring relationships with mature adult members.[46] The aim, according to Clark, is for mature leaders to invest in making emerging adults followers of Christ.[47] The task is a long-term faith journey, where authentic trust in God is modelled to emerging adults, who begin to recognise that the church is where all members belong to and need each other.[48] The key elements of the relationship between leaders and emerging adults in this stage of discipleship are friendship, safety, accountability, warmth and intimacy.[49] These relational qualities will create the right atmosphere for discipleship opportunities at an intimate level.[50] Because the leader has built trust, his or her influence is vital, as he/she has become a key figure in the life of the emerging adult.[51]

When leaders have nurtured the trust and confidence of the emerging adults within their sphere of influence, a more formal mentoring arrangement becomes the natural result. This final stage will be discussed in the next section.

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[46] Clark, *Hurt,* 188.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Clark, *Myth of the Perfect Youth,* 120.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid., 121.

Mentoring Level

The focus of the next level of ministry is developing a mentoring relationship with mature adult leaders in the church, often in the forum of a small group.[52] The aim at this level is for emerging adults to have at least one mature adult who models a spiritual journey with them and who will introduce them into the body of believers.[53] Spiritual adoption into the church body, both structurally and relationally, is the true end goal of ministry to emerging adults.[54] It is only as emerging adults enter the church body and are accepted as an integral part of the church at all levels of operation that they will find their true spiritual home. Nurturing spiritual development is considered the most important of all youth ministry outcomes according to Strommen.[55]

Smith's research results identified several combined influences that were present in the lives of emerging adults with the highest level of religiousness. These influences were found as clusters in those emerging adults who had high levels of religious affiliation and made an enormous difference in their religious conclusions.[56] These influences were gleaned from surveys conducted on American emerging adults; however, they could be seen as generic and effective in the Australian context as well.

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[52] Clark, *Myth of the Perfect Youth,* 121.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Strommen, *Youth Ministry That Transforms,* 156.

[56] Smith, *Souls in Transition,* 220.

The first influence was the religion of the parents, which makes sense, as parents are formational in the lives of most emerging adults.[57] Parents play a vital role in the faith development of their children as well. It would be fair to say that parents would be the best example of a mentor to their children, as long as they exerted a positive influence and they are connected geographically and relationally. Smith's research revealed that approximately two thirds of emerging adults identified themselves as similar to their parents.[58]

There are, however, reasons why parents may not be in a position to actively be involved in a mentoring role. Smith points out that for many emerging adults, the religion they were raised with is connected with a phase in life that was characterised by dependence upon their parents.[59] In their desire to stand on their own two feet, many emerging adults may create distance from their parents in terms of church attendance or practices.[60] In this respect, parents may not be in a position to act as a mentor regardless of their personal desire to remain in that role. While it may not be parents who act as mentors in a local church setting, it must be stated that the faith of parents is of crucial importance in shaping the faith of emerging adults. Mentors need to be aware of the impact of parent's faith on the lives of the emerging adults they are working with as their history will affect their outlook on God. The legacy they leave with their children has long lasting implications for their faith development.

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[57] Smith, *Souls in Transition,* 220.

[58] Ibid.*,* 128.

[59] Ibid., 150.

[60] Ibid.

The second influence is the importance of faith and prayer, which is a private area of one's spirituality.[61] In the context of a mentoring relationship, it is also vital to include conversations about one's personal faith and prayer life. As mentors, this is the kind of content that discussions should include. The mentor should mention their own faith journey and the path God has taken them on. Mark Yaconelli explains that the transforming power of prayer in the life of leaders begins to permeate their relationships with younger people.[62] He maintains that as leaders develop an awareness of God's presence within their ministry setting, God impacts the relationships in that setting.[63] This is one area where the mentor could model what a life of prayer is like. Including the emerging adults in a prayer journey will deepen their faith and develop confidence in exploring the presence and personhood of God.

The third influence is the value of scripture reading, which is both a private and public element of faith development.[64] Reading scripture is the most overt influence and one that hardly needs to be mentioned. However, while it may seem elementary to include reading scripture in the list of disciplines for spiritual development, there are many emerging adults who have difficulty engaging with the word of God.[65] Fields raises the point that many students have difficulty reading the Bible.[66] Roger Dudley, an

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[61] Smith, *Souls in Transition,* 150.

[62] Yaconelli, *Contemplative Youth Ministry,* 99.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Fields, *Purpose Driven,* 363.

[66] Ibid.

Adventist youth researcher, also found that reading the bible was one of the weaker habits amongst Adventist youth, with only thirteen percent involved in a daily reading habit.[67] Dudley found that thirty percent of students indicated they read the Bible weekly and another twenty one percent read it at least monthly.[68] Fields asserts that initially it may be better to engage with resources that serve as an introduction to the study of scripture, which will instil in emerging adults a sense of confidence as they develop the discipline.[69]

There are several pivotal elements of faith development that mentors need to be aware of, and model to, emerging adults in order to facilitate their personal faith journey. The goal of mentoring emerging adults is to enable them to embrace their own faith, however, it must be recognised that caring adults can and do often share in that growing process.[70] Facilitating faith development is one of the core roles of adult mentors. Another core role of mentors is to develop relationships within the church family. Diana Garland describes the notion of churches forming "faith-families" especially for persons who are alone, for example, emerging adults whose families may not be part of the church community.[71] In a real sense, a faith-family may operate like a matchmaker, who seeks out appropriate ties with members of the church who can offer support and

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[67] Roger Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories From a 10-year Study* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 42.

[68] Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave, 42.*

[69] Fields, *Purpose Driven,* 364.

[70] Robins, *This Way To Youth,* 397.

[71] Garland, *Family Ministry,* 374.

enrichment to emerging adults.[72] By building strong ties with other church members, emerging adults are being connected with people who nurture them into the heart of the church family.[73] As mentors facilitate the relationship building process, emerging adults will find their home in the community of believers. It is only as mature members spiritually adopt and invest in their welfare, that emerging adults experience true community and wholeness in the body of the church. The adoptional model of ministry is based upon building strong relationships with emerging adults.

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[72] Garland, *Family Ministry,* 374.

[73] Ibid.

CHAPTER 6

AN EFFECTIVE PRAXIS FOR LOCAL CHURCH EMERGING ADULT MINISTRY
LEADERS

Clark's model of adoption into the body of the church involves several elements

that, when combined, produce an integrated process of spiritual growth. These elements

will be developed further in this chapter. For the model of adoption of emerging adults to

be effective, the following elements must be present.

Firstly, intentional mentoring and nurturing relationships with mature leaders in

the body of the church need to be developed over the long term. The ministry model of

adoption has been illustrated by a strategic ministry focus, the funnel of programming,

which emphasises the process of adoption through deepening relationships. Secondly,

there needs to be a focus on several spiritual disciplines that allow God to transform the

lives of emerging adults. Engaging in spiritual disciplines will develop spiritual growth as

part of a holistic ministry to emerging adults. Thirdly, there needs to be an incarnational-

missional approach to life, as emerging adults engage their wider social context. These

elements of ministry will be discussed in the following sections.

Intentional Relationships

Involvement in church related friendships is a vital component in the spiritual adoption of emerging adults. Leaders who wish to promote spiritual adoption in this age group need to recognise the value of informal friend relationships. Only as genuine relationships are formed will emerging adults experience true growth in spirituality and ministry focus. It is also necessary to highlight the fact that within any level of intimacy in relationship, issues may arise that the mature adult will need to facilitate and deal with in a professional manner. An informal counselling process, therefore, may become a necessary feature in many youth mentoring programs.

Counselling as Nurture

Support and nurture for emerging adults can be provided by various forms of counselling. While a counselling process may not be considered a central element of an effective relational youth ministry program, there are increasing numbers of young adults who need emotional and psychological assistance for various reasons.[1] In a growing number of families, issues may exist that emerging adults do not have adequate skills to address without the support of other caring people.[2] Providing informal and formal counselling options serve to equip many emerging adults to overcome various personal challenges and enter into a fuller participation in the community of the church.[3] Through support vehicles like counselling, emerging adults become more able to minister to

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[1] Strommen, *Passing on the Faith,* 214.

[2] Garland, *Family Ministry,* 381.

[3] Ibid.

others. This intimate level of support forms part of the adoptive relationship that defines a faith community.

Christian faith development is enhanced by adults who act as mentors, guides and models for emerging adults.[4] The impact of significant relationships with mature adults is much more valuable than the occasional peak experiences within some youth ministries.[5] Dunn asserts that parents and other mentoring adults have the most important effect over the long term on the lives of students.[6]

While mature adults may differ in age from emerging adults, there is evidence that having relationships with caring adults is a valuable source of spiritual growth.[7] One of the remaining institutions with the presence and spiritual perspective that can provide this kind of caring adult is the community of faith.[8] These adult mentors who provide care and a listening ear need to uphold basic Christian values; for example, a genuine relationship with God, a positive view of the church and a real concern for young adults.[9]

Dryfoos maintains that while it is important to match adults to young people, they have to be attached to at least one adult who cares for them.[10] There are certain

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[4] Strommen, *Passing on the Faith,* 215.

[5] Mark DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry Sec Ed* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 90.

[6] Richard R. Dunn, "Putting Youth Ministry in to Perspective," in *Reaching a Generation for Christ: A Comprehensive Guide to Youth Ministry,* eds. Richard R. Dunn and Mark H. Senter (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1997), 31-2.

[7] Strommen, *Passing on the Faith,* 215.

[8] DeVries*, Family-Based,* 83.

[9] Strommen, *Passing on the Faith,* 215.

[10] Joy G. Dryfoos, *Safe Passage: Making it Through Adolescence in a Risky Society* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 139.

characteristics of the ministry relationship that will enhance the safety and productivity of the mentoring/counselling relationship between emerging and mature adults. The important relational characteristics of mature adults who minister to and mentor emerging adults are summarised as follows.

Firstly, to understand the emerging adult's perspective on life, including the ambivalence and dissatisfaction often displayed by emerging adults.[11] Secondly, to establish the relationship as a partnership with a shared approach to the situation.[12] This means treating emerging adults as valuable, handling them with care and building strong close relationships in order to change lives.[13] Thirdly, to nurture emerging adults in order to create a foundation of hope.[14] Every emerging adult needs a crowd of witnesses that cheer them on.[15] The church can be the primary vehicle that provides this extended adult family.[16] Fourthly, in cases where there is underlying problematic issues, to refer to a qualified professional where necessary.[17] This kind of relational support is very beneficial for emerging adults who are still unsure of many issues related to mature adult faith.

There are other forms of support that adults are able to provide for emerging adults. Peter Bensen has identified 40 community assets that aid emerging adults. These

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[11] Strommen, *Passing on the Faith,* 218.

[12] Ibid., 219.

[13] David Veerman, "How Can Leaders Build a Relational Youth Ministry?" in *Reaching a Generation for Christ: A Comprehensive Guide to Youth Ministry,* eds. Richard R. Dunn and Mark H. Senter (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1997), 220-1.

[14] Strommen, *Passing on the Faith,* 219.

[15] DeVries, *Family-Based,* 85.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Strommen, *Passing on the Faith,* 219.

can be divided into external and internal assets.[18] External assets are provided from

external sources like other adults or systems. Internal assets are driven from within the

individuals themselves. These assets can derive from personal belief systems as well as

community support mechanisms. The more of these assets a young adult possesses, the

better their chances are to refrain from at risk behaviour.[19] While Bensen is primarily

focusing on communities at large, the same principle can be displayed within the context

of a local church. Local church communities can provide virtually the same support via

relationships. In fact the church can provide community in profound ways due to the

nature of their particular belief system.

The local church can offer support and nurture to families and younger

individuals by becoming a matchmaker, form natural environments where members can

learn to care for each other.[20] There are many functions performed within a local church

setting where adults can offer nurture and support similar to that of a parent. Valuable

social skills can be modelled by stable church adults who can teach skills in problem

solving, listening, forgiving, handling anger, and appropriate levels of intimacy, as well

as various forms of ministry to others.[21] Emerging adults need mature adults who know

the value of remaining connected as the mentoring process evolves over time.[22] The

support of an extended Christian community who encourage and affirm an emerging

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[18] Peter L. Bensen, *All Kids Are Our Kids* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997), 2-4.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Garland, *Family Ministry*, 374.

[21] Ibid., 396-7.

[22] Devries, *Family-Based,* 86.

adult will promote growth toward Christian maturity.[23] Emerging adults are looking for

God's truth, actively lived out, as they observe and experience mature adults applying

Christian principles to their lives.[24]

Opportunities also exist for local church congregations to provide support for

families with emerging adults who have particular lifestyle issues; for example, cases

where emerging adults have substance addictions and need specialised or more than

normal levels of care. The local church can provide these support mechanisms for

parents.[25] In this way, local churches can play a pivotal role in encouraging, supporting

and commissioning emerging adults for ministry in a wide range of ways.[26]

Service as Ministry

Opportunities for service are another form of support that local churches can

provide to help emerging adults become part of the church family. The benefits of service

are significant in helping to develop self-confidence, self-esteem and social skills.[27]

Serving helps emerging adults to see themselves as playing a significant role in the lives

of others. The positive elements include the fact that service helps emerging adults to

resist at risk behaviours.[28]

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[23] Devries, *Family-Based,* 87.

[24] Veerman*, How Can Leaders Build,* 223.

[25] Garland, *Family Ministry,* 381.

[26] Ibid., 387.

[27] Ibid., 389.

[28] Ibid.

Service is of particular importance for emerging adults who have limited options for skill enhancement. For those who come from lower socio-economic sectors, serving helps them to contribute to communities in a meaningful way.[29] Skills learned through service include, but are not limited to, reliability, responsibility, perseverance and the ability to complete tasks. These are all valuable assets that build a sense of self-worth within emerging adults who may otherwise become victims of at-risk behaviour borne out of a lack of perceived value.[30] Serving also creates a forum for multi-generational relationships to deepen and provides life experiences that promote spiritual growth. This kind of community building through practical service strengthens individuals, families and church communities.[31]

Every emerging adult needs relationships with others who they can learn and receive nurture from. The church is in a unique position to connect them with Christian adults, who can cheer the younger members of society on as they make the necessary steps toward adulthood.[32] It is during this time, when adolescents can so easily offend members of the community, that they need adults who have the wisdom and patience to remain connected as the process of maturation continues.[33] The extended Christian community is a family of believers who encourage and affirm emerging adult growth

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[29] Garland, *Family Ministry,* 389.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., 86.

toward adult Christian maturity.[34] Doug Fields adds that it is so valuable for students to have relationships that have an element of accountability with their parents and the church body.[35] He acknowledges that relationships are the backbone of the values taught in his youth ministry program. [36] Fields also acknowledges that youth leaders need to earn the right to be heard by first caring for their young people.[37] Chap Clark champions the cause of caring relationships in order to assist emerging adults in becoming mature Christian adults, when he states, "As God's agents of this high calling, we have only one strategy, one tool, and one task: love."[38] Clark is referring to the role of parents in the lives of their adolescent children; however, he highlights the point that loving relationships are a powerful tool in helping them receive Christ.[39] Robbins also affirms the need for teenagers to be supported by caring adults who will journey with them as their faith is internalised.[40] In fact, Robbins states that spirituality and the process of discipleship cannot be experienced apart from community.[41]

Kara Powell notes that an adult youth worker's presence in student groups in many way is like a sports coach who draws from personal experiences to mentor and

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[34] Garland, *Family Ministry*, 87.

[35] Fields, *Purpose Driven,* 235.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., 236.

[38] Clark, *Disconnected,* 32.

[39] Ibid., 32.

[40] Robbins, *This Way to Youth,* 400.

[41] Ibid., 401.

train students in their spiritual life.[42] Similarly, youth pastors or workers who may have gifts in specific areas may need to bring on board other youth coaches who have giftedness in complimentary areas to help youth experience God in different ways.[43]

Clark takes adult involvement further when he asserts, "Adults must care for and reach the individuals who have suffered from abandonment throughout their lives."[44] Adults who are aware of the influence of deliberate, consistent, relational concern, nurture and care, will fill basic needs in many adolescents to heal the sense of abandonment.[45] Apart from caring parents, the church remains one of the few lifelong influences.[46] The church family is one of the last bastions of Christian nurture that lasts from birth through life, until retirement.[47] Over the long haul, young adults will be positively affected by ongoing, meaningful experiences with adults much more than by occasional peak experiences.[48] For emerging adult ministry to be effective, the primary aim of the leaders should be to build connections with the emerging adults under their care.[49] It must be recognised that building strong relationships with adult church members will consolidate younger members; however, ultimately, emerging adults need

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[42] Kara Eckmann Powell, "Focusing Youth Ministry Through Community." in *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry*, ed. Kenda C. Dean, Chap Clark, and Dave Rahn (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan/Youth Specialties, 2000), 204.

[43] Ibid., 205.

[44] Clark, *Hurt*, 170.

[45] Ibid., 171.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., 90.

[49] Ibid.

to encounter an authentic relationship to Christ through these relationships. This aspect of faith development will now be discussed in order to highlight some effective spiritual disciplines.

Spiritual Disciplines

The topic of spiritual disciplines will now be discussed. It is of vital importance that leaders and mentors model their spiritual lives to emerging adults. By engaging in spiritual disciplines, and sharing their insights about God, leaders demonstrate God's transforming presence in their lives. Emerging adults need to encounter the presence of Christ in their lives through personal times of reflection and engagement in practices that allow God to speak clearly. Through various disciplines, which will now be discussed, mentoring leaders reveal how the Spirit draws honest searchers into a deeper understanding of God's will for their lives.

There is a powerful flow of the Spirit being experienced today in the lives of many believers.[50] God is moving among people today in ways that highlight the life of Christ and the impact his life can have on the lives of believers today.[51] However, in order to pursue a life of connection with God, the nature of the spiritual life itself must be clarified and examined.[52] Once the purpose of spiritual disciplines has been clarified, several of the core spiritual practices will be discussed. These will hopefully then form

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[50] Richard J. Foster, *Streams of Living Water: Essential Practices From the Six Great Traditions of Christian Faith* (New York, NY: Harper-Collins, 1998), xv.

[51] Ibid.*,* 1.

[52] Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of The Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988), xi.

part of a personal strategy for leaders and emerging adults who wish to develop their faith and become disciples of Christ. It must be understood that the call to discipleship is an offer of a vivid life transforming relationship with Christ.[53] The notion of being saved by Christ is not merely some future event, but literally entering into his eternal life in the present while living in the current social context.[54]

Christ not only offers eternal life, but in a very real sense provides a clear paradigm for living in any community.[55] This is particularly poignant in relation to the various devotional practices known as spiritual disciplines.[56] The following paragraphs will not attempt to be exhaustive in outlining a complete array of spiritual disciplines, but more of a summary of several practices that will guide emerging adults into a life of constant interaction with the Kingdom of God.[57] In reality, God wants to be available, present and experienced by all who are entering the community of faith.[58] One of the foundational needs for developing relationships with mature adults is the need to be wanted and appreciated.[59] As these relationships deepen with other people of faith, an awareness of the presence of God begins to grow and a new level of intimacy is

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[53] Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, xi.

[54] Foster, *Streams of Living,* 1.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Willard, *Spirit of The Disciplines,* xi.

[58] Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (London, UK: Harper Collins, 1998), 88.

[59] Ibid*.,* 89.

discovered.[60] It is in the discovery of a new level of intimacy that a person realises that

God actively seeks those who thirst for his love.[61] It is within this discovery of new

relationships, not only with mature Christians but also with the God they serve, that

emerging adults deepen their own spiritual life. As Holt affirms, what constitutes

authentic spirituality is a combination of, "being, relationships, and practices."[62]

It is in the combination of meaningful relationships with other mature believers

and personal spiritual practices that a person's being is transformed into who God has

created them to be. Paul alludes to this fact when he states, "Be transformed by the

renewing of your mind." (Rom 12:2). This transformation is the outcome of the influence

of genuine relationships with other believers and the active engagement with activities

that bring a person into the presence of God. Holt outlines three distinct aspects of

spirituality. The first is the capacity to integrate spiritual elements within physical

activities.[63] The second is the style one uses to relate to God and their world.[64] The third

aspect is academic in nature, referring to the study given to the topic by interested

thinkers.[65] When a new believer actively pursues these realities, spiritual formation

occurs within their life.[66] The term "spirituality" is derived from the Greek word πνευμα

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[60] Willard, *Divine Conspiracy,* 89.

[61] Bradley P. Holt, *Thirsty for God: A Brief History of Christian Spirituality* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress press, 2005), 1.

[62] Ibid, 5.

[63] Ibid., 7.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

and refers to "wind, breath, life, soul and spirit."[67] While there are many contexts in which this word is used, the relevant application here is that the life of one who is in relationship with Christ takes on a spiritual dimension. So the "spirit" then is a dimension of reality and forms part of the physical life of a person of faith.[68]

Returning to the thought that Christians need an active relationship with Jesus, Foster promotes the notion that there be an intentional "imitation of Christ" in the life of the believer by ingesting the spirit by which Christ lived.[69] In this sense, there is a merger of both the physical and the spiritual world. As Willard states, regarding God's relation to space, "He occupies and overflows it but cannot be localised in it."[70] Christians grow spiritually by engaging with God in various ways. This will be the focus of the next section of the essay.

There are devotional practices that have, over time, become clear paradigms for spiritual growth and living.[71] These practices, known as disciplines, will be discussed in order to provide strategies for emerging adults who wish to develop faith. There are two primary objectives of the spiritual disciplines, which need to be underscored at this point.

The first objective is to bring a person to the point where they love dearly and delight constantly in God made flesh and are totally confident that there is absolutely no

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[67] Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1968), 332.

[68] Holt, *Thirsty For God*, 7.

[69] Foster, *Streams of Living,* 1.

[70] Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy,* 87.

[71] Foster, *Streams of Living*, 1.

limit to his goodness, love and power to carry his intentions out.[72] It is this truth or

message that provides the assurance that his world is the only perfectly safe place to live

one's life.[73] As the person is filled with his love, and the inward fears and hindrances are

removed, the spirit led response will be to do everything he has told us to do.[74] This is

clearly the message the apostle Paul articulated in Romans 8:5-6, 35 and Galatians 5:19-

25 when he states, "The mind controlled by the spirit is life and peace;" also, "Who shall

separate us from the love of Christ?" He concludes his pericope in Galatians by saying,

"Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."

The second primary objective of the spiritual disciplines is to free believers from

the enslavement and dominion of old habitual feelings and thought patterns.[75] There

needs to be a disruption of old habits by doing physical things differently with intentional

practices that place the body and soul before God.[76] Doing things differently in effect

becomes the basis for spiritual disciplines and a new way of life.[77] These primary

objectives are inseparable and are both vital to any form of spiritual formation.[78]

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[72] Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 352.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid*.,* 353.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

Spirituality is essentially about being.[79] Holt rightly asserts that a high level of spirituality is reached when an individual is able to see all physical activity as secondary in relation to existing before God.[80] As Paul stated, "For in him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:28). The focus moves from the old physical world to an ever-increasing awareness of the presence of God's authority in this life. Several spiritual disciplines will now be highlighted in an attempt to provide a practical application to the process of spiritual formation. The following cluster of spiritual disciplines are not meant to be comprehensive, but will serve to direct attention to some of the core spiritual habits that enhance ones relationship with God.

Contemplative Discipline

The first spiritual discipline to be discussed is contemplative discipline. Several biblical figures provide fine examples of contemplative discipline: David contemplated on Gods law, character, creation and salvation.[81] The apostle John's teachings emphasised the love of God. Both David and John are excellent examples of people who exercised contemplative discipline. The apostle John's time in captivity in solitude provided him with the ideal context for the final revelation of Christ.[82] Both David and John provide insights into the centring power of quiet meditation and prayer.

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[79] Holt, *Thirsty for God*, 22.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Foster, *Streams of Living,* 32.

[82] Ibid., 33.

The best example of contemplative discipline, however, is found in Christ, who often retreated to remote places, particularly the forty-day temptation in the wilderness (Mt 4:1-11, 15:21, 17:1-3, 26:36; Mk 1:35; Lk 4:42, 21:37). It was during these times that Christ, displaying his humanity, experienced the deepening love of God.[83] Contemplative discipline is also a time of solitude that involves denying oneself of companionship and interaction with others.[84] It is during times of solitude that the soul is confronted with conflicts and obscure forces that normally escape one's attention.[85] Solitude can be confronting, however; it is the act of drawing close to God that enables individuals to return to society as free persons.[86] In summary, contemplative discipline is prime in the process of transformation, as God slowly captures the faculties, beginning with the heart, will, mind, imagination and passions, as the entire personality becomes like Christ.[87] Contemplative discipline does not act in isolation, but builds a foundation for daily living.

Holy Living

Contemplative discipline lays a foundation for the discipline of living a holy life.[88] The focus of this discipline is on the inward transformation of the heart and the

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[83] Foster, *Streams of Living,* 49.

[84] Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines,* 160.

[85] Ibid., 161.

[86] Ibid., 160.

[87] Foster, *Streams of Living*, 51.

[88] Ibid., 61.

outflow of "holy habits."[89] Jesus is a prime example of this kind of holy living by integrating his inner life of faith and his outer life of actions.[90] As man, he rose early to fellowship with God; through his outward actions daily he modelled compassion to all, especially the outcast.[91] He fiercely opposed those who distorted God's truth, but offered healing to dozens of hopeless people demonstrating his concern for the physical life as well as their spiritual healing.[92]

James, the half-brother of Jesus, also is a prime example of living a holy life.[93] His passion was to demonstrate faith based works, a spirituality that produces a new kind of person.[94] Hence his famous phrase, "Faith without deeds is dead" (Jms 2:26), which places the emphasis on pure motives for faith based action[95] This kind of spiritual discipline is more of an interface with humanity that is derived from devotion to God. A heart that is divinely transformed will naturally produce right action.[96] A pure heart is the wellspring of all right acts, and living a holy life is one of the visible facets of spirituality.[97] As with contemplation, the discipline of holy living is not meant to act in

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[89] Foster, *Streams of Living*, 51.

[90] Holt, *Thirsty for God,* 34.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Foster, *Streams of Living,* 67-8.

[94] Ibid., 70.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid., 71.

[97] Ibid.

isolation from other vital elements of spiritual formation. Right action springs from the gifts of the spirit.

Charism of the Spirit

Another spiritual discipline involves the movement of the Charism in the life of an individual.[98] Brian McLaren mentions, regarding the Spirit's movement in the life of a believer, that, "The Spirit of Jesus is real, active, powerful, present, and wonderful."[99] Indeed the gifts of the Charism or Spirit are deeply rooted in scripture and are given to believers for the common good of the church[100] Healthy spiritual empowerment is tied to spiritual formation and is a vital element of discipleship.[101] In fact in the strict sense, spirituality is being dominated by the Spirit.[102] The Spirit was to play a vital role in the life of the formation of the early church as evidenced by Christ's admonition, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses"(Acts 1:8). The reception of the Spirit soon after at Pentecost ushered in the powerful honeymoon of the early church.[103]

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[98] Foster, *Streams of Living*, 99.

[99] Brian D. McLaren*, a Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 174.

[100] Holt, *Thirsty for God,* 50.

[101] Foster, *Streams of Living,* 103.

[102] Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. Caridad Inda and John Eagelson (New York, NY: Orbis, 1973), 203.

[103] Holt, *Thirsty for God*, 50.

Paul embodied a rich portrayal of both the objective and subjective elements of spirit led living.[104] He also provides several of the clearest lists of gifts of the Charism in the New Testament (Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12; Eph 4:11-13). The Charism or spiritual giftedness places special emphasis on life lived through the Spirit of God.[105] The practical benefits of discovering ones giftedness will enable emerging adults to find their place in the broader community of faith.[106]

Developing an understanding of the Charism places emphasis on worship as a spiritual experience shared in the day-to-day life of the faith community.[107] This corporate sharing of such a meaningful experience is one of the bonding elements within the realm of spiritual disciplines that emerging adults are hungering for. It is through social relationships that emerging adults also become aware of social issues within the broader community. This leads to the spiritual arena of social responsibility.

Social Responsibility

The practical outflow of spiritual disciplines is an increasing awareness of the social responsibilities that arise from being a member of God's church. Engaging in the social arena is one outflow of having the power to accomplish the works of God within

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[104] Foster, *Streams of Living,* 106.

[105] Ibid., 125.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology – Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 75.

any given sphere.[108] Living with compassion addresses the imperative of the gospel to strive for equality and justice globally.[109]

The prophet Amos is the champion of social justice as a spiritual discipline, urging for societal reform as a spokesman for the Father.[110] Amos called all to stand for justice at a time when injustices were so pervasive that they became the norm.[111] His focus on justice is epitomized by the famous statement, "He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Mic, 6:8) These words demonstrate that appealing for justice and peace alone while showing compassion to those in need flows naturally from journeying with God.[112] By highlighting social justice, Amos draws attention to the social ramifications of the gospel. By raising social convictions, he is by nature prioritizing spirituality.[113] The increased awareness of social concerns among emerging adults forms a natural link to the heart of God, who is the defender of the fatherless and the widow.

Jesus also provides a rich foundation for social action when he echoed Isaiah's appeal in the synagogue stating, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the

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[108] Foster, *Streams of Living,* 137.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid., 144.

[111] Ibid., 145.

[112] Holt, 161.

[113] Kärkkäinen, *Ecclesiology,* 183.

year of the Lord's favour." (Lk 4:18-9) The spiritual discipline of engagement in social

justice is in contrast to the widespread ethic of confining Christianity to the intimacy of

one's private life.[114] Deitrich Bonhoeffer makes this point clearly in his statement, "It is

only by living in this world that one learns to have faith… living unreservedly in life's

duties, problems, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities. In so doing we

throw ourselves completely into the arms of God."[115] Allowing the Spirit to permeate life

necessitates engaging with society's social structures and responding appropriately.[116] In

essence, social justice as a spiritual discipline is in effect where love hits the road.[117]

Many emerging adults are keenly aware of social injustice, which feeds into the need to

explore the spiritual implications of social justice and mercy. God speaks to the mind of

all who are confronted with inequality and oppression. At this point, emerging adults can

seek counsel from the word of God in order to live an integrated Christian life.

Devotional Study

The study of God's word is another spiritual discipline that provides the context

for all spiritual pursuits. It is through the spiritual discipline of Bible study that the word

of God is engaged.[118] Through a study of scripture, the work of God is seen in the

journeys of others, in nature, in history and the church.[119] By study it is not meant to be

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[114] Kärkkäinen, *Ecclesiology,* 182.

[115] Deitrich Bonhoeffer*, Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York, NY: Collier, 1972), 369-70.

[116] Foster, *Streams of Living,* 166.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines,* 176.

[119] Ibid.*,* 177.

an academic pursuit as such, but in this sense the focus is on enquiring and meditating on what is studied.[120] The centre of the Christian faith is found in God who revealed himself through the incarnation of Jesus Christ.[121] The meaning and context for understanding this event is described through the history of Israel in the Old Testament, and the documented life of Christ as found in the New Testament.[122] The Scriptures then form the foundation of the Christian faith, and are recognised as normative by every major Christian tradition.[123]

At the centre of the scripture is Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the predictions of the Old Testament prophecies, and is the key of its chronological order.[124] It is the study of scripture that provides the impetus for all preaching and witnessing and as such, forms a crucial part of any spiritual discipline. It is through the study of scripture that all evangelistic endeavour is based and as such is tied in with preaching and witness.[125] The apostle Peter is a prime example of one who developed a scriptural foundation for evangelism.[126] From this platform he took the word of God and focused on proclamation of the good news with great effect.[127] The spiritual discipline of study and faith sharing includes some of the significant themes of the Christian faith, being the proclamation of

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[120] Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines* 177.

[121] Holt, *Thirsty for God,* 32.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Foster, *Streams of Living,* 200.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid., 187.

the Gospel, and the central role of scripture as the repository of the Gospel.[128] As Foster states, "The Bible is the word of God written, just as Jesus is the Word of God living. Evangelical faith is biblical faith."[129] For emerging adults, gaining insight into the living word of God has tremendous meaning and power when combined with an evangelical focus. This is one of the core spiritual disciplines for the development of life in the Spirit.

Incarnational Living

The Spirit filled life implies that the Spirit invades life in all realms, so life becomes incarnational in every aspect. The incarnational discipline focuses on making visible the invisible realm of the Spirit.[130] Nowhere is the incarnation displayed more dramatically than in the personhood of Christ. Through the incarnation, God brought his word to humanity and brought humanity to potential conformity to that word.[131] The incarnation of Christ reveals a God who is devoted to humanity and makes his grace and love tangibly accessible to finite beings.[132] The incarnation also embodies the humanity of God in the person of Christ, and a new human community where he is known personally.[133]

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[128] Foster, *Streams of Living*, 219.

[129] Ibid., 221.

[130] Ibid., 237.

[131] Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology – Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press. 2001), 71.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid., 164.

So in a very practical sense, mature Christians are to bring this Christ-like kind of life into their homes, work environments, relationships with friends, family and neighbours and even their enemies; in summary, all they are and do.[134] The community of faith is called to incarnational living as an outgrowth of their dependence upon God.[135] For emerging adults engaging in the church, this kind of life enables them to discover that "holy ground" is everywhere and everything they do is "sanctified action."[136]

Through the various spiritual disciplines outlined above, emerging adults will deepen their spiritual life and build an intimate relationship with God. These disciplines will become for them a source of strength and provide purpose and meaning as they engage in the body of the church. These disciplines enable the Spirit to transform every aspect of church life. In addition, the natural outgrowth for emerging adults is an outward focus to the broader community in need of support, direction, fellowship and salvation. As part of Gods church and reaching out to the extended community, emerging adults begin to live out the Spirit's desires by engaging in the mission of the church.

Incarnational Missional Engagement

Emerging adults need to engage in the mission of the church as God continues his incarnational and missional activity in a lost world. In order to consider how emerging adults will live out the Spirit's desires, a brief discussion of the church and its

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[134] Foster, *Streams of Living,* 263.

[135] Ibid., 272.

[136] Ibid.

mission will follow. Mission is not one aspect of the church, rather, mission is the church initiated and sent by God to heal and restore creation.[137]

Mission implies "sending" and is central to describing God's activity in human and ecclesiastical history.[138] In the midst of major societal and cultural paradigm shifts, it is crucial to re-examine the foundations of what the εχχλεσια or church of Christ is, and the role it continues to play in the world.[139] There is also a constant need to explore the church's formation, which informs its continuing ministry and purpose.[140] Guder emphasises the calling for "the church to be missional—to be a sent community."[141] Franke also asserts that the church "not only has a mission but is missional by its very nature."[142] The point here is that the church is missionary at its core, and expresses itself as church as it is sent to participate in God's missionary activity by the Spirit.[143] As Christ revealed the father through the incarnation of Christ, the church is also to reveal the nature of Christ by missional activity within its present context.[144]

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[137] Darrel L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 4.

[138] Ibid.

[139] Graig Van Gelder, *The Missional Church in Context – Helping Congregations Develop Contextual Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2007), 1.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for,* 109.

[142] John R. Franke, *The Character of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 70.

[143] Van Gelder, 28.

[144] Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things To Come – Innovation and Mission for the 21ˢᵗ Century* (Massachusetts, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 37.

There are several implications for the church as it becomes incarnational in its missional approach to people groups. Firstly, through incarnational modes of operation, it has the missional currency to become part of any people subgroup without damaging the organic culture that gives that group its history and meaning.[145] Secondly, the incarnational nature of mission identifies itself with a given people group in ways that do not compromise the integrity of the gospel.[146] Thirdly, incarnational nature of mission necessitates an authentic missional presence within the people group.[147] Finally, the incarnational nature of mission implies that people will experience Christ within their culture.[148] With these facts in mind, it is important to capitalise on the transforming power of the incarnational approach as the church becomes truly missional. Missional congregations are potentially the most powerful vehicles God has to reveal his love within a given context.[149] The missional congregation acts as a catalyst in that it provides new ways of being and living in its particular host community.[150]

Up to this point in the discussion several themes have been explored in order to create a picture of the church context that emerging adults are attempting to engage with. The discussion will now turn to strategies for the implementation of a theologically

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[145] Frost, *The Shaping of Things To Come*, 37.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Ibid., 40.

[149] Scott Fredrickson, 'The Missional Congregation in Context' in *The Missional Church in Context: Helping Congregations Develop Contextual Ministry ed. Craig Van Gelder* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 49.

[150] Ibid.

appropriate, contextually sensitive ministry to emerging adults. As previously mentioned, the need for mature adults to create intentional relationships with emerging adults will provide opportunities for natural partnerships to emerge in ministry. Mature adult leaders creating and modelling an incarnational relationship with an emerging adult can offer guidance in missional activity.

The mature leader in an incarnational missional role will need to focus on the development of a "covenant community," which acts as a foretaste or instrument of the "reign of God."[151] In this missional covenant community, God designs to create a pilgrim type people, who are continually searching for souls who will be reconciled to God.[152] Therefore, the reign of God through Christ becomes the social fabric of the faith-based community.[153]

The motif of God's pilgrim community moving toward God's ultimate reign becomes the centre of church identity and life.[154] As God continues his work of entering into physical reality and renewing that reality, the missional community freely explores this newness.[155] Guder refers to the concept of partnering with God on his incarnational or missional journey as a "centered set" organisation that invites people to adopt a set of commitments and values as opposed to boundaries and entry points.[156] The focus is on

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[151] Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for,* 204.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Ibid.

[155] Van Gelder, *Missional Church in Context,* 51.

[156] Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for,* 206.

partnering with God as he continues to transform the world through the church. Hirsch identifies four dimensions of Christ's incarnation, based on John 1:1-18, that are useful in understanding how the incarnation is facilitated, these dimensions are outlined as follows: Presence: In Christ, God is present to all. Proximity: In Christ, God has approached all in ways that all can access. Powerlessness: In Christ, God became a servant, not someone who rules over humanity. Proclamation: Christ called all to repentance and heralded Gods reign.[157]

The principles outlined in these four dimensions of Christ's incarnation are valuable tools for missional activity with centred sets. Being present and in close proximity to the lives of the broader community is an effective relationship base from which to engage in becoming the message of Christ to others within a given social context. Also, assuming the position of powerlessness removes the traditional power-based approach to outreach and presents a commitment to humility. Finally, once relationships of trust and authenticity have been established through familiarity and mutual respect, the proclamation of the Gospel and an invitation into the reign of God becomes a natural progression as an outgrowth of authentic friendship.[158] This is an excellent relational progression of life transforming encounters that will inspire and deepen the faith of emerging adults and the leaders they have partnered with.

By taking an incarnational approach based on the four principles outlined above, the centred set partners enter the broader community and lay foundations for other

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[157] Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways,* 132.

[158] Ibid., 134.

missional communities.[159] Gradually the centred set commit to certain values, practices and disciplines that form what Guder refers to as a unique bounded set type of missional community.[160] The focus within the bounded set would be similar in many ways to the way Christ chose his disciples who became his closest friends.[161] In the same way that people associated with Christ, people who see the way an incarnational group functions in their community, may opt to join that community and extend God's kingdom further.[162] Those who choose to associate with an incarnational community begin the formation of a new centred set, which continues the process of transformation, from host community to centred set and finally to bounded set communities.[163]

The role of leaders in the bounded set is to welcome the informal centred set congregation to the covenant bounded community and to invite those members of the bounded community into a deeper discipleship journey.[164] Emerging adults who are involved in the missional process with the leadership will play a vital role in relation to new centred set seekers and assist leaders in supporting roles.[165] Due to the increased fluency of this approach, intentional relationships between leaders and emerging adults

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[159] Guder, *Mission Church: A Vision for*, 207.

[160] Ibid., 208.

[161] Ibid., 209.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Ibid., 211.

[165] Ibid.

become a crucial aspect of the relational network.[166] It is only in this way that the

majestic themes of the kingdom of God will be translated into the practical, contemporary

language of the people.[167] The same grand narratives like forgiveness, redemption, grace

and love that transformed the lives of those who encountered Christ historically will

continue to profoundly transform the lives of people in need of renewal today.[168] Only as

mature leaders embody the truth of redemption and renewal, will emerging adults be

inspired, mentored and discipled into the life God has planned for all who choose to

follow him.

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[166] Van Gelder, *Missional Church in Context,* 121.

[167] Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways,* 115.

[168] Ibid.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this ministry focus paper has been to establish an appropriate

social, contextual and theological basis for ministry to emerging adults that would lead

them into a genuine encounter with God through the Adventist church. Beginning with a

brief survey of the broader Australian cultural context, which outlined several social

trends, the reader would gain insight into the ministry challenges that confront the

corporate church. In conjunction with the survey of Australian culture, the second chapter

revealed the disheartening pattern of disengagement by many emerging adults in

Australian Adventist churches.

Chapters 1 and 2 revealed a cluster of reasons why many emerging adults chose to

disengage from active involvement in the local churches. The primary reason given was

the lack of authenticity among older church members and the strong emphasis they

placed on non-essentials while not caring about people.[169] These sad responses speak to

the heart of the problem that exists in many local churches, where a lack of intentional

mentoring relationships and caring attitudes exist between older mature church members

and emerging adults. Smith summarised the value of intimate relationships in retaining

emerging adult's religious loyalty. He maintains that most people wish to avoid

relationship breakdown particularly if they have invested heavily in that relationships.[170]

It is vital that leaders develop these strong ties with emerging adults by nurturing them as

they mature.

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[169] Strahan, *Valuegenesis,* 54.

[170] Smith, *Souls in Transition,* 232.

Clark affirms the value of intimacy as a critical element in making disciples of Jesus Christ who engage in an authentic walk with God in the context of a loving Christian community.[171] Clark stressed the point that it is a "long term journey of faith"[172] whereby adults and emerging adults recognise that the church is a community where every member needs and belongs to each other.[173] This has to be the aim in all ministry to emerging adults if the church corporately wishes to remain relevant to the emerging adults within its midst. In summary, the first section highlighted the needs that need to be addressed if the church is to empower emerging adults.

The second part of the research involved both a brief examination of the theological foundations and processes of analysis that undergird effective ministry to emerging adults. Beginning in Chapter 3, Adventist theological focus points were discussed to provide a historical perspective on how ministry to emerging adults has been operating. By focusing on two Adventist theological focus areas, insights were provided as to the orientation of traditional Adventist youth ministry. These two focal points of Adventist theology, the imminent return of Christ and obeying the commandments including keeping the Sabbath holy, continue to be dominant in Adventist thinking and still have a bearing on Youth ministry. These theological focus points provide the background for several relational models of ministry, which will be of use in providing a model of ministry to Australian emerging adults. Beginning with the traditional Adventist end time orientation and focus on obedience to Gods law, the discussion progressed

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[171] Clark, *Hurt,* 188.

[172] Ibid.

[173] Ibid.

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toward exploring other biblical mandates for effective ministry to emerging adults. By considering Paul and Christ, as leaders who developed intimate relationships with their respective ministry churches and disciples, as well as New Testament motifs of family and the role of the Holy Spirit in continuing to nurture the church, valuable models of adoption in ministry can be derived that are functional in the current context.

The aim of a theology of adoption is to facilitate the spiritual development and maturation of emerging adults into the body of the church by placing them in relationship with mature adults who act as mentors. For any ministry to emerging adults to be effective, certain parameters need to be taken into consideration. Once a theology has been developed, there are other contextual elements that need to be considered. These elements need to be assessed in order for a balanced ministry to emerge.

Chapter 4 discusses an analytical template for assessing the effectiveness of youth ministry practice. This template draws attention to five essential elements of an effective ministry model for emerging adults. The template includes clarity of purpose, theological appropriateness, psychosocial realities, cultural and environmental realities and effectiveness of programmatic structure. These elements provide a thorough framework from which to analyse any youth ministry initiative and to objectively critique such ministries. The value of analysing ministry programs is found by recognising that there are a variety of considerations that need to be considered when attempting to care for emerging adults. Effective ministry is realised when consideration is given to a combination of factors including clarity of purpose, theological appropriateness, psychosocial development, cultural and environmental realities as well as programmatical

issues. The template provided will aid ministry leaders who wish to create an effective ministry of adoption for emerging adults.

The third part of the research paper focused on effective ministry praxis for Australian Adventist emerging adults. Chapter 5 provides a biblical model of adoption for emerging adults, which explains the process of re-engaging emerging adults from disengagement or nominal involvement in a faith community into a life transforming relationship with God. Through intentional relationships, spiritual formation and meaningful ministry activities, the emerging adult is nurtured into the body of the church. Flowing out of the processes of the adoptional model of ministry, several key strategies of implementation have been discussed.

Arising out of the biblical model of adoption, Chapter 6 explores several strategies that will provide effective nurture and facilitate spiritual growth toward maturity among emerging adults.

The first of these strategies involves building intentional relationships between mature leaders within the church and emerging adults. The impact of these relationships is life long and plays a major role in the consolidation of emerging adults as they find a spiritual home in the community of faith. These relationships would be developed in a variety of pathways depending on the context; however, the constant thread is the mentoring and nurture of emerging adults by mature adults. As mature adults authentically journey with their younger counterparts, their faith and confidence in God becomes the model that younger believers imbibe. The relationship would also involve spiritual insights derived from the mature adult's personal journey with God.

The second strategic focus was on the development of life changing spiritual disciplines. These spiritual disciplines become the building blocks for a lifelong transforming relationship with God. As emerging adults discover God through contemplation and prayer, holy living, the Charism of the spirit, studying the word, becoming socially responsible and living incarnationally, they are transformed into God's likeness. Thus God lives within the community of the church and in turn is able to transform other lives through the believers.

Finally, as the church engages in incarnational missional activity through entering the broader social environment, the partnership between mature leaders and emerging adults bears fruit. At this stage, committed leaders in the church partner with emerging adults who venture back into the world and bring healing to others. By living the Christ life of presence, proximity, powerlessness, and proclamation, emerging adults will have an attractiveness and appeal that is irresistible. The lives of emerging adults who have been transformed through intentional relationships and an active relationship with God will assist in fulfilling the divine commission so eagerly anticipated by Christ when he declared, "As you have sent me into the world, I have sent them." (Jn 17:18) The emerging adults, empowered by the church, will enter into the missional activity in local communities, ushering them into the presence of God and teaching them how to live incarnationally through Christ. It is only as the church surrounds emerging adults with the love, nurture and care they need, that the family of God will become all God intended her to be.

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