

**Psalms 71:18** *"Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the **next generation**, your mighty acts to all who are to come." (NIV)*

#### Pew Research

- Adults who identify as Christians fell from 78% to 71% between 2007 and 2014.
- Adults who identify as "Religiously Unaffiliated" (meaning atheist, agnostic, or "nothing in particular") jumped 16% to 23%. Rise of the Nones.
- Mainline Protestant: United Methodist, the American Baptist Churches USA, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the Episcopal Church has experienced the greatest dip in numbers.
- From 2007 to 2014, mainline Protestant adults slid from 41 million to 36 million – losing 5 million member.
- Roman Catholic adults fell from 54 million to 51 million (losing 3 million member drop).
- Adults in evangelical denominations (Southern Baptist Convention, the Assemblies of God, Churches of Christ, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and the Presbyterian Church in America), as well as adults in nondenominational churches with evangelical leaning grew from 60 million to 62 million.
- Although the total number of evangelicals has increased, the total number who identify as evangelical has actually decreased almost 1% from just over 26% to just over 25%.
- Historical black Protestant denominations, such as the National Baptist Convention, the Church of God in Christ, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Progressive Baptist Congregation, remain stable at almost 16 million adults.
- According to 2015 US Census Bureau data, adults ages 18 to 29 comprised 22% of the adult population. Yet that same age group represents less than 10% of church attendees nationwide.
- Evangelical Protestant congregations have the highest concentration of young adults at 14%, followed by Catholic parishes at 10%, and mainline Protestant congregations at 6%.

- 40-50% of youth group seniors drift away from God and the faith after they graduate from high school.

## HOW TO GROW YOUNG AS A CHURCH

from the book, *Growing Young*

### 1. Unlock KEYCHAIN leadership.

**1 Timothy 4:12** "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are **young**, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity." (NIV)

### 2. EMPATHIZE with today's young people.

In their study, the authors of *Growing Young* said there are three questions we need to help young people with:

- Who am I? (a question of identity)
- Where do I fit? (a question of belonging)
- What difference do I make? (a question of purpose)

**Romans 12:9-16** "9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited." (NIV)

### 3. Fuel a warm COMMUNITY.

**Colossians 3:12-14** "12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, cloth yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which brings them all together in perfect unity." (NIV)

4. Take JESUS' message seriously.

**1 Corinthians 1:18,22-24** “<sup>18</sup> For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God ... <sup>22</sup> Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” (NIV)

5. PRIORITIZE young people (and families) everywhere.

**Goals:**

1. Learn more about Growing Young--<https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/growingyoung>
2. Hire and youth and children's minister.
3. Create great spaces for youth and children.
4. Mission Trips and Serving Experiences.
5. Include more in all the ministries of the church.
6. Following and supporting them through college.
7. Parenting, Mixed Family Parenting, Single Parenting, and Marriage Classes
8. Equipping: What do you want them to know, spiritual disciplines—bible reading, praying, fasting, etc. spiritual practices like godly marriages, money handling, etc.

**Deuteronomy 6:4-9** “<sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>5</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup> These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. <sup>7</sup> Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. <sup>8</sup> Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” (NIV)

6. Be the best NEIGHBOR.

Research: when 500 youth group seniors were asked what they wished they had more of in youth group, of the 13 options, here are the top 4:

1. Time for deep conversations.
2. Mission Trips
3. Service Projects
4. Games

**Romans 13:8-10** “<sup>8</sup> Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup> The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>10</sup> Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” (NIV)

### **RESULTS OF GROWING YOUNG CHURCHES** from the book *Growing Young*

1. More SERVICE.
2. More PASSION.
3. More INNOVATION.
4. More MONEY.
5. More overall HEALTH.

### **BOTTOM LINE**

**Psalms 148:11-13** “<sup>11</sup> Kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, <sup>12</sup> **young men and women**, old men and **children**. <sup>13</sup> Let them praise the name of the LORD, for His name alone is exalted; His splendor is above the earth and the heavens.” (NIV)