

Title: Active Mentoring as a Way to Retain Young People in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Introduction: Although official numbers difficult to obtain, a LifeWay research survey claims that approximately 66% of Christian young people will leave the church (Meyer, 2019). Therefore, retaining young people must remain a high priority for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In this poster, we describe a mentoring in a local church as a creative way to retain youth.

Description: The South Bay Seventh-day Adventist Church in Chattanooga, TN (Georgia-Cumberland Conference) pairs young people with an adult mentor starting at the age of 7. These young people are involved in every aspect of the church (Sabbath school, music, potluck, community outreach, audiovisual, etc). As the youth mature, they are given increasing responsibility and leadership roles.

Primaries: function as assistants in Beginner Sabbath school, help with community programs, go with adults on outreach.

Juniors: all of the above plus function as assistants in Kindergarten Sabbath school, help with audiovisual, participate and vote (if baptized) in church business meetings, serve as helpers in vacation Bible school, help with potlucks.

Earliteens: all of the above plus function as Beginner leaders, help lead evangelistic series, serve on music committee, serve on audiovisual team, lead specific sections in Vacation Bible School programs.

Youth: all of the above plus lead out in specific church programs (Adventist Youth, Day of Prayer and Fasting, etc), function as deacons or deaconesses, lead out in community wide youth events (Adventist Youth with a Mission).

Discussion: The future of our church is our youth. One of the reason young people leave the church is a perceived lack a connection to the church (Meyer, 2019). Mentoring can help provide connection by providing three key elements: 1) loving friendship and affirmation from older adults, 2) opportunity to participate with voice in the decisions of the church, and 3) training in church leadership roles. Mentoring does not need a large church, but it does require adults intentionally engaging children and youth in developmentally appropriate roles. This takes time, patience, and commitment. The local church that engages in this model becomes a safe place for these youth mentees to make mistakes, learn, and grow.

Conclusion: Mentoring is another tool to help retain Seventh-day Adventist youth. South Bay Seventh-day Adventist church provides a replicable model for mentorship.

Sources:

Meyer, H. (2019, January 15). What new LifeWay Research Survey says about why young adults are dropping out of Church. The Tennessean. Retrieved April 28, 2022, from <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/religion/2019/01/15/lifeway-research-survey-says-young-adults-dropping-out-church/2550997002/>



South Bay junior leading kindergarten song service



South Bay young people bussing tables for Dinner with the Doctor.



South Bay young people on outreach (in the rain!)



South Bay youth helping declutter home as part of community service outreach



South Bay young people leading song service for church campout



South Bay junior leading craft time in kindergarten (outdoor church)