

## INTRODUCTION

The Youth and Young Adult Ministry Task Forces, whose participants' names are listed at the end of this report, met several times via Zoom between mid-March and mid-September, 2020. We divided the work into three sub-groups: (1) youth ministry, (2) campus/college ministry, and (3) young adult ministry outside of or beyond college ministry. These sub-groups also met via Zoom or conference call a number of additional times. Each sub-group was led by a pair of task force members who consulted with other persons (also listed at the end of the report). From this collective effort, we present the following report and recommendations.

We want to make sure to impart the sense of urgency regarding youth and young adult ministries to the new denomination's leadership. We appeal to them not to repeat the mistakes of the past when it comes to young people. The quality of their spiritual lives serves as a mirror of the spiritual health and vitality of older adults, indeed, of the church as a whole. Therefore, as we complete our part of this work, we want to say as firmly as we can that pursuing youth and young adult ministry in the new denomination demands thoughtful, culturally aware (for a truly global church), biblically sound, morally courageous, exemplary leadership, from the highest levels of the new denomination to every expression at the local level.

In what follows, you will find an executive summary accompanied by more detailed material for each sub-group as well as an addendum. We offer this work with the prayer that God will use this effort to produce much godly fruit.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section introduces points of emphasis given in greater detail in subsequent sections.

### **Shared Foundational Convictions**

We strongly encourage leaders tasked with developing youth and young adult ministries to follow paragraphs 101 through 107 of "Doctrines and Discipline" carefully as not only theological, but practical guides. We recommend a catechism that serves an ongoing purpose, taking "Doctrines and Discipline" in manageable portions with appropriate explanation, for reference and use after confirmation or joining the church. (The Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church is a good model for a comparable Methodist resource.)

We emphasize the importance of classes and bands and sustained teaching on the Wesleyan approach to discipleship. We strongly recommend that the new denomination's leaders work with qualified people to develop the necessary resources for this goal.

An essential step in this vision includes fostering relationships between young people and older adults who model Christ and are willing to share their lives with young people. The new denomination's culture must include commitment to discipling the rising generations. Just as importantly, older adults learn from young people, who, by sharing their insights, also learn their value to the Body of Christ.

## Youth Ministry

Being known and valued by a group is a critical developmental step for youth to be formed in godly character. This crucial work happens through practicing spiritual disciplines in community, especially the discipline of reading scripture. We especially recommend especially inductive Bible study on a wide scale. Training for people working with youth, from volunteers to full-time staff, must be thoroughly biblically grounded and theologically substantive. Appropriate accountability measures, along with training, must be enforced.

## College/Campus Ministry

We recommend developing a strategy for bringing existing Wesley Foundations into the new denomination and for planting new ministries on campuses where there will be no initial presence. In each case, leaders should choose a campus ministry model conducive with available funding. It may be advantageous to build a campus ministry into the vision of a new church start. The new denomination needs an adequate funding strategy for campus ministries, since it will be starting almost from scratch.

## Young Adult

This category of persons may be the most overlooked of the three groups. Finding a place within the community of the congregation is of crucial importance. They have an acute sense of ethical and other changes in culture that affects many of their relationships. They seek consistent and compassionate doctrinal and ethical guidance.

### DETAILED SUB-GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

## Youth Ministry

### 1. Biblical and Theological Anchor Points

- Holiness and integrity
  - Holiness as expressed through Christian integrity/Christian character
  - Scriptural examples (NRSV):
    - Leviticus 19:12, “And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the Lord.”
    - Matthew 5:48, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”
    - 1 Peter 1:15-16, “Instead, as he who has called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”
    - 2 Timothy 2:15, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.”
  - Resources:
    - After You Believe by N.T. Wright (how much Christian character you have is essentially a marker of how spiritually mature you are)
    - Miriam Swafford sessions at New Room Conference 2019
    - Jean Twenge, iGen: Why Today’s Super-Connected Kids are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy--and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood--and What That Means for the Rest of Us (Atria Books, 2018)

- Reliance on the Holy Spirit (which seems to be radically neglected in student ministry)
  - The book of Acts, especially Pentecost
  - Resources:
    - By Signs and Wonders: How the Holy Spirit Grows the Church by Stephen D. Elliott
- Spiritual disciplines
  - Scriptural examples:
    - Deuteronomy 10:16, “You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and fix them as an emblem on your forehead.”
    - Hebrews 8:10, “This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”
  - Resources:
    - Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline (Hodder and Stoughton, 2008)
- Faithful community
  - Scriptural examples:
    - Hebrews 10:24-25, “And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”
    - 2 Timothy 3:16-17, “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.”
  - Band meetings/small groups are crucial
  - Resources:
    - Seedbed Discipleship Bands
    - Scott Kisker and Kevin Watson, The Band Meeting (Seedbed)

## 2. Developmental and Social/Communal Markers

- Youth need to belong to a group that has a purpose. This is true of all ages, but developmentally, for youth it is a crucial step.
- Youth also need to know that they bring value to the group, that they contribute. Their presence and their input matters to the group (also true of all ages, but especially important for youth). This knowledge must be based on truth, not just words that we say to youth to help them feel good about themselves.
- These markers are not something we give; students have them. We need to learn about and be trained in the basic broad strokes of what human development in this stage looks like so that with this experience we can partner with parents in assessing what is normal.
- We recognize and encourage attention to differences from country to country and culture to culture, even from youth group to youth group and student to student. Each youth bears the image of God.
- Leadership development starts with recognizing leadership qualities in youth. We need focused leadership training opportunities for youth.
  - Resources:
    - Reggie Joiner and Kristen Ivy, It’s Just a Phase - So Don’t Miss It, (Orange).
    - The Youth Becoming Leaders program at Asbury University in Wilmore, Kentucky is already doing this very well.

### 3. Youth Leader Education and Training

- Our concern: without some theological training the Bible can be taught based solely on a person's feelings, which we should avoid. Youth leader training is essential.
- Basic Standards/Requirements for Youth Ministry Certification
  - By the time a person has served as a youth minister for one year, that person must begin the following certification process to be completed within the first 18 months after hire date. (The first year allows time to discern calling and decide to continue or not.)
  - Failure to complete certification within the time frame or to meet satisfactory requirements will result in the youth minister's local church being notified. The new denomination should recognize the need to let go of individuals who do not meet these standards. Most importantly, the local church must recognize liability for any incidents that happen while that youth minister is employed.
    - 1 retake per course allowed.
  - Certification regionally overseen by an ordained clergy person. Seminary- trained individuals with 4 years' youth ministry experience should administer classes.
  - Classes (offered both online and in person) include regular meetings of 12 students with moderators for questions. Courses may be offered on a pass/fail basis. The courses should include the following:
    - Wesleyan Theology (12 weeks)
    - Age-level Development (12 weeks)
    - Practical skills in youth ministry (4-6 weeks)
      - Developing and keeping a program/activities
      - Relational skills in youth ministry
      - Communication tools
      - Budget development and management
      - Event planning and logistics
      - Volunteer development and oversight
    - Inductive Bible Study (4-6 weeks)
      - Not simply theories about leading Bible studies, but learning how first to study the scriptures and then teach.
        - Resources from Seedbed
          - Give Me That Book: A Primer for the Practice of Inductive Bible Study
          - Seedbed also has a downloadable inductive Bible study cheat sheet.
          - David Bauer, Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics (Baker Academic, 2014)
  - Coaching
    - Use the relationship of Paul & Timothy as a model.
    - We strongly suggest these as online courses in conjunction with meeting with a mentor.
    - Youth minister can either be mentored by a seasoned youth minister that is seminary trained and has at least 4 years experience OR an ordained clergy person in the same congregation.
    - Need to develop training for ordained clergy who will serve as mentors AND a different training for seminary trained and experienced youth ministers who will serve as mentors.

- Cohort approach: Receive training, learn, and practice alongside youth ministers from multiple congregations, ideally in the same city or region
- If further training after this certification is desired, the youth minister is encouraged to go to seminary. (Talk with seminaries to see if they would be more willing to admit applicants who have completed this certification.)
- Practical theology training for volunteers, part-time workers, and full-time workers: practical theology follows a model of reflection using these four questions:
  - What is happening?
  - Why is it happening?
  - What should be happening (biblically and theologically)?
  - What do we do now?
  - Answering these questions scripturally and within the Wesleyan understanding of the Christian life is crucial to good youth ministry. Volunteers will need help from trained leaders to do this work effectively.

## Campus Ministry

### 1. Campus Ministry Models in the New Denomination.

- Over the past 60+ years, Methodist campus ministries at state universities have nearly exclusively followed the Wesley Foundation model (purchase property, construct facilities, appoint an elder, commit to significant conference support). In the future, we believe a combination of models can be utilized, including:
  - The model of the PCA (Presbyterian Church of America) with their network of RUF (Reformed University Fellowship) ministries.
    - A director who as a missionary raises at least part of their compensation and overall ministry budget.
    - No purchase of property or construction of facilities. Worship and office space is either provided by a local church or rented.
    - Denominational support is far less than the current Wesley Foundation model requires.
  - Local church based.
    - The campus ministry is a ministry of a local church in the college town. The church provides the needed facilities and financial support as they do for all of their other ministries. Most of the largest campus ministries existing today are outreaches of mega churches located in college towns.
  - Local church/campus ministry plant.
    - A local church is planted with the vision of building an adult congregation as it establishes a college aged contingent.
- The new denomination will need to clarify the nature of its relationship with its campus ministries. It's likely that relationship will vary depending upon the degree of support the denomination provides.

### 2. Develop a Strategy for Campus Ministry

- Identify existing Wesley Foundations (thought to be 25 - 50) that plan to affiliate with the new denomination.
  - Determine the current level of annual conference/district support they receive.
  - Create a plan to replace lost support to enable their ministries to continue uninterrupted through the transition.
- Plant new campus ministries

- With a large majority of existing Wesley Foundations staying with the UMC, a national and regional strategy for planting new campus ministries should be developed as soon as possible.
  - Identify effective college town churches as partners to start ministries to the campus
  - Identify college towns best suited for a church plant that would also serve as an outreach to the campus.
  - Identify high priority college campuses where the denomination or conference takes the lead in planting a campus ministry independent of a local church.
- Regional/conference leaders should determine which campuses are the highest priority to have a ministry presence first. The goal is to most effectively utilize available funds.
  - Develop tiers of campuses to be reached over time.
- Establish how campus ministries will be related to annual conferences in terms of financial support, appointment of campus ministers, and general accountability and oversight.

3. Appoint national and regional leaders to develop a strategy/vision for campus ministry and create a vital campus ministry culture that will attract gifted ministry leaders.

- Rather than leaving campus ministry as an afterthought to each annual conference, we recommend creating a core team of campus ministry leaders to develop a vision and strategy for the national and regional church.
  - We recommend the appointment of a national director and a small team of regional directors. They would be tasked with:
    - Developing a strategy of prioritizing campuses, determining the best model for each campus, and creating a funding strategy.
    - Facilitating training events for campus ministers.
      - Sharing best practices
      - Reinforcing Wesleyan theological foundations
    - Providing ongoing oversight and support for campus ministers.
    - Identifying and recruiting new campus ministers
    - Serving as a resource for campus ministries searching for new leadership.

4. Develop a standard for educational and credentialing requirements for campus ministers.

- It is imperative that the educational and credentialing pathways created in the new denomination encourage, rather than discourage, people from pursuing their callings.
  - Conferences in the existing UMC are often unsure what to do with those called to campus ministry. There is no clear established pathway for them. The process often discourages those who would otherwise serve effectively.
- Those called to serve as full time campus ministry directors should have the same opportunity for credentialing as elders do who serve as local church pastors. If the new denomination wants to excel in campus ministry, they need to place the same value on campus ministers as accorded to those who pastor the local church.
  - In the existing UMC, those called to campus ministry are often directed by their conference board of ordained ministry to seek ordination as deacons and not elders, which creates the impression of campus ministry as a second-tier calling. Therefore campus ministry in the UMC is, in most settings, weak and ineffective.
  - However, ordination should not be required for any campus ministry position. As a principle, we need to value anointing and giftedness over credentialing.

- Campus ministry directors (those who serve as 'the director in charge') should be strongly encouraged to pursue a 2-3 year post-graduate seminary degree equivalent to the requirements for ordination as an elder.
  - This education can be pursued while serving as a campus minister, and in most cases should be completed within 8 years.
- Those serving in a long term capacity on a campus ministry staff should at minimum be encouraged to complete a 5 or 6 course certificate in campus ministry, developed in partnership with a seminary.
  - This education can be pursued while serving as a campus minister, and in most cases should be completed within 3 years.
- Annual conferences, or the denomination as a whole, should be encouraged to provide something akin to the Ministerial Education Fund to help offset the cost of seminary.
  - We encourage campus ministry boards to support their campus ministers who are pursuing seminary by providing time for study and financial aid, when possible.

#### 5. Relationship to Church Planting & Multiplication

- During the summer of 2020, members of the Youth and Young Adult Task Force met with a member of the WCA Church Multiplication Task Force to discuss potential collaboration between campus ministries and church planting efforts. There is a clear missional benefit to focusing some new church starts near major universities where no biblical Wesleyan campus ministry exists, such that it might be possible to start a campus ministry which transforms into a local church, or plant a local church with a strong emphasis on college ministry.

#### 6. Developmental Challenges.

- While the main developmental challenges for youth are to know that they belong and that their belonging is important to the group, for college students, having a clear identity and purpose stand as crucial developmental goals. Since colleges and universities have become more careerist in their programs, it becomes all the more important for the church to teach and encourage young people to understand who they are in Christ and to recognize that they have a calling that does not rest superficially on whatever career or job they may have. (This point holds the same for young adults outside of college.)
  - Resource: Tim Clydesdale, *The Purposeful Graduate: Why Colleges Must Talk to Students about Vocation* (University of Chicago, 2016)
  - David Setran and Chris Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry* (Baker Academic, 2013)

### **Young Adult Ministry (Beyond Campus Ministry)**

#### 1. Developmental Markers and Challenges

- Identity and vocation loom large for this group, similar to college students.
- At least two groups make up this category of young adults: (1) young adults who did not attend college or attend part-time while working, and (2) college graduates moving into professions. These groups have similar needs in some ways and are distinct from each other in other ways, even though in the same age group.

#### 2. Specific Challenges Identified from Focus Group Conversations

- This subset of young adults often gets overlooked by congregations, especially those who have not married. While churches have youth groups and connections (sometimes)

to campus ministries, young adults not fitting either category too often go unnoticed. The new denomination's leadership should pay close attention to research on emerging adulthood.

- Confusion about the church's views and guidance sexuality emerged as a major concern in this sub-group. They feel caught between their desire to bear faithful witness to scriptural ethics and maintaining good relationships with their glbtq friends (See appendix.).
- A significant proportion of young adults struggle with mental health challenges and desire effective counseling, support and guidance from the church. Depression, anxiety, and PTSD were particularly emphasized.
- In a related way, they express desire for guidance (including examples and mentoring) of good practices and rhythms regarding spiritual disciplines, work-life balance, and ethical boundaries.

### 3. Recommendations

- Teaching the faith once delivered is paramount.
- The new denomination needs to offer sound teaching on singleness and marriage, coupled with strong community support for both states.
- Listen to the oppressed and marginalized (congregations need to know the poor and marginalized – we must not be a strictly middle class church).
- Rhythm of life challenges – good rhythms need to be encouraged, modeled and taught. The Wesleyan class and band meetings received much attention in the focus group. Small groups are essential for the health of the Body of Christ.
- Mental health challenges must be addressed straightforwardly (e.g PTSD, depression, anxiety)
- Promote peer testimony and process in healing ministries.
- Help parents understand their role as parents – not to over-protect. This point also reveals the strong need for community beyond parents. Other older adults potentially play a powerful role in the lives of young adults.
- Resources:
  - Jeffrey Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* 2nd edition (Oxford, 2014)
  - David Setran and Chris Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry* (Baker Academic, 2013)
  - Christian Smith, et. al., *Lost in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (Oxford, 2011)
  - Tim Clydesdale, *The Purposeful Graduate*
  - Tim Clydesdale and Kathleen Garces-Foley, *The Twenty-something Soul: Understanding the Religious and Secular Lives of American Young Adults* (Oxford: 2019)
  - Timothy Tennent, *For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body* (Seedbed Resources)
  - Beth Felker Jones, *Faithful: A Theology of Sex* (Zondervan, 2015)

### Task Force Members

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Additionally, these persons contributed significantly to work in the sub-groups.

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#### ADDENDUM

(This letter and the attending statement come as a recommendation from the young adult (outside campus ministry) subgroup. Sexual ethics was a major point of discussion with their focus group members. They seek help and support from the new denomination for effective witness with their friends who struggle with what those friends perceive as the church's cruel stance on sexual identity and practice. These young people, however, are committed to a traditional biblical understanding and want to be faithful and loving witnesses to the truth.)

To The LGBTQ+ Community,

Hi. It's me, the [new denomination]. You probably heard that I left the United Methodist Church in part because I believe in the sanctity of traditional marriage. I know that's made things awkward between us. There's a rift now, and sometimes it feels like we'll never be able to cross it. But I don't want things to be that way. That's why I'm writing to you. I know you've been hurt by many people who believe like I do. I may have done some of the hurting myself. For that I'm so sorry. When you told me that it felt like I hated you, it was like a dagger going through my heart. I can't say I blame you. It's probably hard to believe someone really cares when their friends won't shut up about how they think you're going to Hell. I call them out whenever I can, but, you know, some people have no filter. They're completely misrepresenting my beliefs about Hell at any rate, but I should probably save that for another letter. I don't want this to be a theological essay. Mostly, I just want you to know how I feel. I want you to know that I don't hate you. I love you.

In 1 John 4:19 it states "We love because he first loved us." This is the truth of how I feel about you. When Jesus gave his life for ours, he revealed to me a love so amazing and inspirational that it completely transformed who I am. I am filled with an unquenchable desire to love people like he did. I want to be the person that gives refuge to every outcast, that brings peace to every broken heart. I want to be the person that feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, cares for the sick, and welcomes the stranger. I want to be the person that is saturated with such agonizing compassion at the suffering of his fellow humans that he is willing even to die for them. I

want to bring that overwhelming love I have been shown into as many lives as I can. That includes yours. I long for you to know how deeply amazing I think you are. Psalm 139:14 says that you are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” That is how I see you. I see somebody full of life, with so much to offer the world. I see somebody whose life’s story is just beginning; a story I want to be a part of.

I know asking you to step into a church is asking a lot. You’ve had to go through things I can’t even imagine. But knowing Jesus is worth it. He understands what you’ve gone through; he knows every ounce of your quiet suffering. And if you let him, he will walk through these struggles with you. So will I, such as I can. I’m not going to try and change you—that’s for you and God to work out. I just want to help you find that same indescribable joy and salvation that I’ve found. And I want to give you someone to lean on when life gets a little too rough. We have these disagreements about marriage and gender identity. It’s true. There are things I won’t be able to do for you because of it. I won’t be able to help out with your wedding. That will make things messy and tense sometimes. Conversations about human sexuality are rarely easy. But I still want a relationship with you. So does Jesus. I believe that the happiness that we could bring each other is worth navigating the messiness for. Maybe you’re not there yet. That’s okay. My hope is that this letter shows how deeply I care about you. Don’t believe what everyone says about me; you are welcome in my house. And when you are ready, I will greet you with open arms.

Love,  
The [New Denomination]

#### A Methodist Statement on Holy Sexuality

We believe the Bible is the inspired word of God and is the authority we submit to on all matters. Therefore, regarding holy sexuality we affirm that the scriptures teach;

1. A holistic view of the human being. First and foremost, we are all beloved children of God. We reject any behavior that does not value the infinite worth of all human beings, regardless of sexuality or gender identity, as children of God.
2. God instituted holy matrimony as a union between one man and one woman who seek to grow in faith and love with God and with one another.
3. Marriage is defined in the scriptures as the only form of relationship for which God intended sexual relations. The sexual bond within marriage is intended to be life giving and self-giving. Sex and marriage are intended to serve as a symbolic representation of the union between Christ and His Church. Sexuality can honor God through marriage or singleness. All other sexual activity, including same sex activity, premarital sex, pornography and masturbation, and adultery is sinful in the eyes of God and of the Church.
4. All are sinners by nature of being human. Therefore, all must repent of their sins and follow Jesus Christ, who is our only hope for salvation. The Church is not a gathering for those who are well and worthy but a field hospital for sinners in need of healing. As a church, we aim to aid one another in denouncing sin and becoming more faithful followers of Christ. Scripture encourages: “Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.” Hebrews 10:24 NLT
5. God is abundantly merciful. There is no sin that is beyond the forgiveness of God. God’s grace is sufficient for all who earnestly confess and repent of their sins.