

## The Lost Generation in Our Churches

Statistics show that the number of children and young people in our churches is rapidly declining.

The articles used are as follows:

- Bridging the Gap: Building relationships across the generations by Jason Gardner
- Have Youth Workers Worked?, An extract from *UK Church Statistics 2005-2015* by Peter Brierley
- The Child Exodus by Chine Mbubaegbu
- It Takes A Whole Church To Raise A Child by Krish Kandiah

### A. What are the Key Problems?

- Numbers in our churches are declining across the board  
*See Peter Brierley article for more in depth statistics*
- Kandiah notes that *“A young person in church is becoming an endangered species”*
- Young people are not connected, or at least not feeling connected to church.
- Children’s and youth ministry is often seen and practiced as separate to ‘adult’ church.
- We wait for young people to reach maturity before giving them responsibility.
- Churches have shifted the responsibility for young people to individual youth workers rather than on the whole church. This has left many youth workers burned out and disillusioned (at young people, volunteers, church)

### B. What about Solutions?

All of the articles recognise the need for a whole church involvement in bringing young people into spiritual growth and the below outline is a suggested method to achieving this.

It takes a church to raise a child, and there are 4 R’s that contribute to this happening.

#### a. Relationships

- There is a biblical premise that we are part of a wider family. We are adopted children (Rom. 8:15, Eph 1:5) and we’re called brothers and sisters a number of times in NT letters.
- If we prioritise relationships we will create an environment where people of all ages are valued and accepted. *“It’s easy to walk away from an event, but it’s hard to walk away from family”*

#### b. Role Models

- young people are perceptive, they see things we don’t think they see
- A parent’s faith is the best tool for evangelism and discipleship, The church needs to sow resources into equipping parents to take on this role

- For young people family situation is their norm, they need role models in their norm
- Whilst church leaders and youth workers are great role models, young people also need the church congregation to offer a model to follow. E.g. young people are more likely to engage in worship if they see adults doing so.

### c. Responsibilities

- Young people need to be treated as part of the family, not as a distant relative who we see for 15 minutes at the beginning of our services. They need to be engaged and seen equally as any other member of the family
- Many young people are experiential learners. We need to help young people reach maturity by giving responsibility. Support them in success and failure alike.

### d. Re-integration

- The change needed cannot become youth church! If the church is family, then it should represent the whole, not just a part. While attempting to find a balance there will be shortfalls, problems, and barriers that need to be negotiated
- There needs to be grace
- We need more people involved in the lives of young people, not less. This involvement doesn't necessarily mean volunteering on a rota but being an active participant in the lives and interests of young people, just as adults would be with their own peers.

## We need to listen!

We need to listen to what young people are saying, both verbally and non-verbally: By listening we show interest, we show engagement, we show family!

## C. Summary

Bringing solution to the above problems is not a finger click away. It will take time, commitment, energy and a shift in priorities.

Church needs to be family. But family doesn't exclude a certain age group, whether old or young. Family embraces, protects, encourages, believes

The problem with young people is not limited to the church.

The problems present opportunities:

*“In a country that often equates teenagers with ASBOs, gangs, crimes, riots and bullying, the Church has a unique opportunity to show that we don't do labels or wash our hands of the 'problem', but we step up to the mark, co-operate across the generations, and provide a place - a family - where children are valued and young people are drawn in, encouraged and loved.” Krish Kandiah*

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**Prayer requests (make into ppt)**

Prayer for anything that God was speaking through what was being said

Pray for youth workers

- encouragement
- growth
- support

Pray for churches

- they'd embrace whole church responsibility
- realise and embrace any changes they need to make to welcome young people into the family
- Pray that we'd be a united family, not a dysfunctional one

Pray for young people

- social situations
- family situations
- attitudes / tensions that led to events such as rioting

Pray for change in churches, young people and leaders so that the gospel of Jesus Christ might be proclaimed more effectively to ALL!

Pray that we'd take the opportunity

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