

How we can reach young adults



Izzy Webb-Pratt, from Cosham and Wymering, explores how churches can reach people her age

HUGE screens, lights, lasers, smoke machines, and a 10-piece worship band led by Amy Grant, Chris Tomlin and Matt Redman simultaneously. That's what might spring to mind when asked what the perfect church might look like for a twenty-something.

There is no denying the allure of such services, drawing in many young people. However, not every church possesses the resources or the budget for such star-studded names. This shouldn't deter smaller churches from embracing their unique strengths and offering something valuable to young adults.

Your twenties are a time of transition. Maybe you're fresh out of university, or embarking on your first 'real' job, or taking the big step of moving away from home for the first time. This phase of life is riddled with uncertainty, anxiety, and, quite often, loneliness. I believe that one of the most significant gifts a church can give to a young person is a place where they feel their presence is genuinely valued.

Feeling valued in a church community is a two-way street. On the one hand, you need to know that you're cared for and that you benefit from being part of the community. But equally important is the feeling that you can give back, serve, and contribute.

For me, one of the most cherished

aspects of church life has always been the post-service conversations over a cup of tea. Engaging with people of all ages, particularly those with more life experience, has been invaluable during the early adult years when everything is new and unknown.

'Young people bring a wealth of untapped skills and talents to the table'

Fostering an environment where young people feel safe to ask questions, seek advice on a wide range of topics, and engage in meaningful discussions is the cornerstone of a church community – one that will resonate with twenty-somethings too.

This mutually beneficial relationship is not only enriching for young adults but also enhances the church as a whole. Young individuals bring a wealth of untapped skills and talents to the table, from helping to lead youth programmes to less obvious roles such as leading prayers or participating in the PCC. They have the potential to breathe new life into the congregation.

Building communities of faith requires creating space for people of all ages. Small churches that may not have a large contingent of young people needn't be

disheartened. You might already have precisely what young adults need!

However, this doesn't mean small churches can rest on their laurels. It's important for them to demonstrate how young people can grow by being part of the congregation.

Hosting events like pub nights, forming small groups, or offering Alpha courses can serve as a bridge to invite young adults into the church. Events like these also need to be advertised in the right spaces – most twenty-somethings are shockingly Facebook illiterate. Instagram is the best medium to reach young adults, and it's not nearly as different from Facebook as you might fear.

By providing a nurturing environment where they feel genuinely valued, encouraging open and meaningful dialogue, and actively involving them in church life, small churches can create a haven where young adults can flourish, both spiritually and personally. 'Smaller' can perfectly fit the bill, especially in the eyes of twenty-somethings seeking connection and purpose in a time of constant change.

From there, it might take nothing more than a generous dose of Christ-like love to make them want to stay.