

## Proposal to Form New Division

# Ministries with Young People

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The mission of the Shared Mission Focus on Young People and that of The United Methodist Church are one and the same: to make disciples for Jesus Christ. The Shared Mission Focus on Young People is a movement about transformation—transformation of young lives and transformation of the church.

Recognizing that the denomination's priorities with youth and young adult ministries needed to be re-ordered, the 1996 General Conference formed the Shared Mission Focus on Young People. The 2000 General Conference mandated the Shared Mission Focus on Young People, a global group of youth, young adults and workers with young people, to develop a denominational strategy for ministry with young people.

The team's initial task included a look at how the church is currently in ministry with young people. Their findings concluded a demographic and sociological case for the need to be intentional about revitalizing and strengthening the church's ministry for, with and by young people. While the average age of the United States is 33.5, the denomination's average age is 56. Only 10% of worship attendees at United Methodist congregations are younger than 30. In a day when people often hear about the destructive paths young people are taking, the team recognized that young people are thirsting after a deeper spiritual connection with someone or something. Their research shows that young people are not avoiding religious affiliation; they are instead flocking to religious groups that empower youth and young adults as leaders.

In full partnership with the United Methodist Youth Organization and the General Board of Discipleship, the Shared Mission Focus on Young People began dreaming of ministries that would best allow the United Methodist Church to empower young people as disciples of Jesus Christ and nurture youth and young adults on their faith journeys.

The dreams birthed from these groups call for a church that



meets young people where they are and exposes them to the radical grace of God, where all ages are partners in mission and ministry, that is truly global in nature and that commits to hearing and valuing the voices of young people, acting with them to transform the world.

The result of this dreaming is to create the Division on Ministries with Young People of the General Board of Discipleship. The purpose of the division is to build upon the Church's current strong ministries with young people and to build new, empowering ministries. A focus on the division will be to resource and train local congregations in ministries with young people. The division will challenge the

denomination to embrace, confirm and celebrate the ministries into which God calls young people. The multi-age group of youth, young adults and workers with young people will advocate for issues concerning young people and nurture ministries where influence and worth are not limited by age or experience.

Additionally, the division will create global networks of young people that do not currently exist in the denomination. □



**Ciona Rouse is Executive Director of the Shared Mission Focus on Young People.**

### To Learn More

More information about the legislation for the Division on Ministries with Young People can be found by calling the Shared Mission Focus on Young People office at 877.899.2780, ext. 1780, or on their web site [www.idreamachurch.com](http://www.idreamachurch.com).