



# CLERGY ROUNDTABLE

**Circuit Rider asked readers...** "How has your church reached out to a certain age demographic in a special way?"

**B**oth of my churches are small, aging congregations. My Cheatham County church has been proactive in reaching out to children, with varying degrees of success. So, despite being predominantly upper middle aged and beyond, they have held a variety of children's programs, like Easter Egg hunts, Halloween parties, VBS, children's sermons, etc.

I'm trying to help both of my churches understand that we need to also be doing programming that will reach out to older adults, as this is a demographic our community is rich in (and quite frankly, it's the strength of our congregations). As a result, we've started adding events such as "gospel sings."

**Michael Turner**

Tennessee Conference

**W**e are really missing people between the ages of 20 and 50. Reaching out to this group is hard! How we get the parents of our kids involved is one of my most difficult tasks. We don't know what it will take. Parenting classes? More contemporary worship? I'm not sure. It's hard to figure out what is needed in a small church with one pastor.

**Katie Z. Dawson**

First UMC, Marengo, Iowa

**A**t Washington Street, we're lucky to have new young adults walking through our doors every Sunday. Because young adults are so varied in their needs, it's important to us to offer a variety of ministries to them. We try to keep it simple and

consistent, since their schedules are busy enough as it is.

We offer two events on a monthly basis: our second Sunday brunch where we either go out to eat after worship or have lunch at the church, and our fourth Sunday gathering where we meet for dinner, fellowship, and programming. The programs range from Bible studies, to game nights, to exploring Christian themes in popular movies, and more. We also reach out to our community with monthly service events, such as the ALIVE! Food Distribution, which distributes fresh food to needy families in our city.

It's also important for young adults to be involved in the leadership of the church as a whole, not just in the young adult program. At Washington Street, young adults serve on virtually every committee, and many are committee chairs.

**Ashley Kent, Director of Young Adult Ministries**

Washington Street UMC, Alexandria, VA

**F**incastle (Virginia) UMC recently hosted an Open Mic Night over Christmas vacation to give teens something safe and fun to do during the holiday break. The event was free and other area youth groups, middle schoolers, and high schoolers were invited to attend and participate. □

## For the next issue's Clergy Roundtable

What changes has your congregation made in response to the struggling economy?

Send your responses to [jkelly@umpublishing.org](mailto:jkelly@umpublishing.org). We will include as many as possible in the May/June/July 2009 issue. Responses may be edited for brevity and clarity.

## Ready-to-Use Idea: Generational Timeline

To jump-start your cross-generational ministry, try this fun activity, courtesy of the Rev. Noelle M. York-Simmons, Associate Rector of All Saints' Episcopal Church in Atlanta.

Bring youth and adults of all ages together during the Sunday school hour or midweek fellowship to share and learn about one another's life experiences. First, have participants sit with people of other generations. (Assign table numbers as people enter, or divide people by birth month or the first letter of their first name, so that the groups are truly randomized.)

Give each table a list of questions about the trends and events that shaped their formative years. Encourage them to share memories and experiences. Some questions to consider:

- What did you wear to school as a child? What did you wear to church?
- What kind of music did you listen to as a teenager? What was the music like in your church?
- What seminal event or events define your generation? How did these events divide your generation?
- What was your attitude about church as a child? Who or what influenced this attitude?

- How did the politics in your formative years affect your faith? How did they affect your family life? How did they affect your church?

After allowing at least 20-30 minutes for conversation, reorganize participants according to their generation. Depending on the number of participants you have, subsets like "younger Boomers, born 1956-1963" may be necessary. Allow some time to share insights from the inter-generational conversations, then introduce the final activity.

On butcher paper or a long bulletin board, create a 100-year timeline with major world events on it, like wars, political movements, and major inventions. Have each group write their own "seminal events" on sticky notes (each age group with a different color). Invite a representative or two from each group to place their sticky notes at their appropriate places along the timeline. When completed, you will have a creative visual showing what events were significant just for certain generations (Woodstock, perhaps?) and what events (like 9/11) have had an impact on the entire church community. □