

WIN TEAM UPDATE: YOUNG ADULTS

July 2018 – Manchester UMC

PRIORITY:	Grow the number of people age 25 to 35 having a first-time experience with Manchester UMC.
GOAL:	By the end of 2021, 4 out of every 10 people having a first-time experience with Manchester UMC will be between the ages of 25 and 35.
LEADER:	Pastor Winter Hamilton
WIN TEAM:	Chessey Brenton, Emily Hardin, Sarah Healy, Heather Kellenberger, Nick McGeehon, Jim Piech, Christy Queensec, Nicki Reinhardt-Swierk, Phil Wiseman, Jeremy Wonn,

A. Briefly describe the most helpful resources your WIN Team is using to gain relevant information:

- We are currently attempting to gather information from people within this age group and from churches who seem to be successful at keeping members of this age in their group.
- Relevant Scholarship from Harvard (*As We Gather, The Care of Souls*) and Pew Research
- Our own relevant experience
- Church Visits

B. Based on your learnings, briefly describe what trends/realities your WIN Team sees working in our favor:

- The first step Manchester made towards effectively reaching young by hiring a young adult ministry which led to an increase of young adult leadership within our church, as evidenced by the development of young adult internships and addition of younger and more diverse staff members. Our delegates to annual conference have included more young adults every year for the past three years. Our WIN teams have also created space at the table for young people. We see this as working in our favor to attract more people of this demographic. In order to continue this development, we will need to increase support and resources which develop young leaders as well as the quantity of those leaders.
- Focus on Fresh expression ministries (New Places for New People) works in our favor. The research shows that millennials tend to dislike “business as usual” at church.
- This is a wide demographic that is need of what to have to offer here, and have needs that are not being met. We know that this demographic is significant and available in our mission fields (they are out there). Young Adult ministry is a hard nut to crack, and there is no cornerstone community for this demographic. No one has found a rigorous and replica young culture in churches within our region.

C. Based on your learnings, briefly describe what trends/realities your WIN Team sees working against us:

- The general perception of “the church” to the millennial generation works against us. According to research, young people often feel harmed by church. Unless these folks are listened to, loved, and responded to, they will not feel comfortable in our church. Bringing in this generation will require us to listen to their unique needs and a willingness to change existing structures that have caused harm, isolation, and apathy. We’re an old church. Change is hard. The amount of change necessary to change the culture of the church to be inclusive of young people will be a lot, and may be more than some of our members are willing to make.
- The church often comes across as needy to young people. It can feel like interest in us is actually interest in preserving church institutions and bolstering numbers. It feels like the church needs us more than we need them (and no one likes that in a relationship). It can seem like people want to see young faces, but not hear their opinions or change their existing ministries. Young adults tend to not respond to our existing outreach methods. Reaching out to young adults will require us to go out beyond the church wells and try new and innovative things.
- This goal involves our entire church population, therefore every area and department of the church population must be involved with it, and that is not our current situation. We’re looking at Manchester UMC as a whole, and this means we will have to examine a lot and have our hands involved in almost every (if not every) part of Manchester. We do not have young leadership in all departments. While we are working towards a culture of young adults, we need to ensure that young adults are included in every area of church life. This would require a shift of control within the church--as our demographic currently skews older. Additionally, we need to ensure that all areas of the church are friendly to families and young children.
- One of the realities of this goal, is that it is honestly difficult to track. Our Team has discussed that these “trends” and “realities” are not something we could really ascertain until we had more information--primarily baseline data that will allow us to assess our current position compared to our goals.

- At Manchester UMC, we tend to see things through our own eyes rather than through the eyes of people we want to reach. We have to learn to look at all our decisions and behaviors through the lens of young adults and those outside of the church walls.

D. Briefly describe the 5 most impactful insights/discoveries/lessons your WIN Team has uncovered so far:

Insight #1	We have to meet young adults where they are (we have to go to them)
Insight #2	We are lacking the appropriate data, as well as the mechanisms to gather and analyse this data.
Insight #3	We haven't asked this demographic what they want, so their experiences are not reflected in our church. Young adults need to be included in every aspect, area, and department of our church.
Insight #4	We have the opportunity to become a cutting-edge leader in the region in the area of young adult ministry so that these children of God are no longer ignored. This demographic is not being reached effectively so we have the opportunity to create and model new practices.
Insight #5	We have found that there are not enough young people visible in leadership and volunteer positions at MUMC. If we want young adults to feel comfortable and welcome, they have to see themselves reflected her.

E. Describe how your WIN Team recommends that we define/measure/count progress toward the goal:

- We must define "first time experiences," and develop a system to measure levels of engagement (i.e., What is a "first time experience"?). We will measure an experience as something that prompts a response. When someone sees an ad in West News Magazine, when they see us at Manchester Homecoming, this is "awareness." Awareness of Manchester is not enough, there must be an authentic connection. Again, connection prompts a response from the "other." This is why the idea of connection cards--data gathering in settings that are also non-worship, non-classroom settings, and yet connectional (ex. Fall Festival) are part of our goal.
- Find a starting point for data (such as attendance/membership of young adults compared to overall church attendance/membership).
- We must create and pilot an effective strategy for data collection, recording, and reporting. As well as, Updating database, creating database policies, regular reporting processes, etc.)

F. Does your WIN Team feel the goal is achievable or does it need to be adjusted up or down? Why?

We believe this is an achievable goal, but we do not yet have enough data to track it. This goal requires unified data collection across MUMC in order to see how our numbers compare to larger church numbers. How will we measure ALL first time connections (and age ranges). If these concerns are not addressed, then we will need to reconfigure this goal so that it is not dependent on information from other areas/departments/teams. Once we have better quantitative and qualitative data, we will more easily determine how to achieve this goal.

G. Provide 5 strategies your WIN Team has identified (or seriously considering) to help achieve the goal:

Strategy 1:	We will collect new data and pilot a program of connection cards. These cards are like pew pads but everywhere so we can measure all first time connections.	Due Date:	Launch at Christmas
Strategy 2:	We also need new methods, procedures, and accountability around data collection, recording and reporting and the replacement of our current database.	Due Date:	Spring 2019
Strategy 3:	Find and execute an effective way to survey people in our target demographic to ascertain their needs and desires.	Due Date:	Start collecting in Fall 2019
Strategy 4:	Measure young adults participating in New Places, and New People, while also connecting young families with existing ministries within our church walls. This strategy is two-fold: connecting young people outside the church, and connecting young people inside the church.	Due Date:	Ongoing
Strategy 5:	We need to remember that it is not about us, and be careful that we aren't exploiting them just because they are young. We have to protect and champion the unique needs of this demographic.	Due Date:	Ongoing
Strategy 6:	Researching existing programs while also having secret shoppers to assess Manchester UMC.	Due Date:	Ongoing

H. Describe how your WIN Team will monitor/measure each strategy to see if it is successful (LEAD Measures)

Strategy 1:	Create connection cards and pilot data collection on Christmas Eve.
Strategy 2:	Replace ACF by Spring of 2019. Create standard operating procedure and system of accountability.
Strategy 3:	Creation and completion of survey with appropriate data collection and reporting methods. We will need to collaborate with other WIN teams for this strategy to be effective.
Strategy 4:	Regular attendance gathering meetings and reporting. Regular updates on database.
Strategy 5:	Monitoring meetings and planning sessions to ensure that young voices are heard. Every key meeting must ask, "how is the perspective of young adults included?" Reporting and collection of feedback, negative and positive. We continue to support this through funding and people resources. Appropriate visibility in leadership conversations and communication. Key bodies in the church should reflect this goal in their demographic (40% of membership is between the ages of 25-35).
Strategy 6:	Shared google doc reflecting findings

I. What are some "quick wins" (easy steps), if any, that your WIN Team suggests we take now?

- Creation of connection card to be piloted at Christmas Eve services.
- Work we are doing with M&M's to make it more family friendly this fall.
- The work we're doing connecting young adult ministry with Circle of Friends and children ministry this summer and next fall.
- Better connecting pastoral care and Stephen Ministries with Circle of Friends and needs of young adults and young families.
- Creating more and diverse small groups for younger people (college-aged, adults, young parents, etc).
- Get the young adults involved, and get people ALL people filling out attendance pads and connect cards.
- Include young adults in worship services (greeting, singing, ushering)
- Visiting and assess other churches. Reporting findings back to the group.
- Improved signage in the building.
- Increased Fellowship seating. Update space. Make sure it is family friendly.
- Make things more parent friendly: Fix the speaker in the cry room. Get working (and safe) blinds. TV in the infant soothing room so mothers can watch the children. Add area for nursing mom's. Changing tables in Men's restrooms.

J. What else would your WIN Team like the Leadership Board to know about your efforts?

- It's about them (the young adults out in the world, not "us").
- While we love the idea of streaming services on Facebook Live, it is vital that our digital presence visually reflect the community we want to reach. In order to attract young adults, young adults need to see people who look like them in worship. By September 2019, 40% of folks on screen should be between the ages of 25 and 35.
- This is going to be a process and there will not necessarily be fast or easily measurable results. This does not mean it is not working and that lives are not being touched. We must be okay with planting seeds and letting them grow in God's time.