



Adult Ministries

Help Adults Love God and Neighbor



G U I D E L I N E S

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Scott Hughes and Motoe Yamada Foor

Discipleship Ministries

ADULT MINISTRIES

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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

ISBN 9781791013561

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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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“A Wreath for Your Excellent Leadership”

Thank you for assuming the important and awesome work of providing spiritual leadership to your congregation. The work of church leadership is shared and synergistic. Pastoral and laity leadership combine to provide the widest possible set of gifts, knowledge, abilities, skills, experience, and passions to fulfill our United Methodist mission to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” (*The Book of Discipline*, ¶120). What you do as a gifted, spiritual leader is of vital importance.

Spiritual leadership differs from other forms of leadership in the foundational ways it allows us to live out the vows and promises we make when joining the church: to uphold The United Methodist Church through our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness.

The first work of all church leaders is to pray for the ministry of the church: local, denominational, and global. Our work is always worshipful work. Our ministry of presence strengthens our church’s ministry and mission. By combining our gifts, knowledge, experience, and passion we can achieve wonderful things together through the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Together, we strengthen our congregation for service to those within the community of faith and beyond. Accepting the mantle of leadership provides a powerful witness to the world of what it means to be a faithful disciple.

Together, we fulfill our mission of making disciples and transforming the world by reaching out and receiving people in the name of Jesus the Christ, relating people to God in covenant community, nurturing and strengthening people in their faith, and equipping and supporting people to live their faith in the world.

The *Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation* draw upon a wealth of experience and expertise to provide you with the basic resources you need to do effective, impactful ministry. Each Guideline focuses on a key area of ministry and church leadership, providing information and processes to help your working group—committee, council, board, or other configuration—excel and support all other working groups. See the accompanying Guide to the Guidelines for useful information on how the *Guidelines* and ministry areas work together.

We recommend that each group member read this Guideline and noted paragraphs from the *Discipline*. Take time at meetings to discuss ways to implement identified tasks and responsibilities, plan for the future, and assess and evaluate your work.

The apocryphal book of Sirach reminds leaders to be humble servant leaders, make sure the needs of others are cared for, and then receive “a wreath for your excellent leadership” (Sirach 32:2 NRSVue). We invite you to lead with humility, compassion, patience, and grace, that The United Methodist Church might be a witness to the light and love of Christ for all the world.

Intentional Discipleship Systems

As we look out across our churches, the problem is not a lack of people, the problem is the church's inability to see and reach them. As leaders in the church our role is to find clarity in the who & what of discipleship, the how of discipleship formation, but most importantly, the why for being disciples and making disciples. This describes the work of intentional discipleship systems or pathways.

John Wesley said it best in *The Scripture Way of Salvation*: "There is a real, as well as relative, change. We are inwardly renewed by the power of God. We feel 'the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us' producing love to all humankind."

This love for all humankind is what drives discipleship. A basic desire to love God, love neighbor, love self, and repeat. To go deeper and deeper into the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, and to offer what we have found to those that we meet.

How do we get back to a movement of a deep love for people that drives everything we do? How do we get back to seeing all the people that God calls us to reach?

The world, now more than ever, needs disciples of Jesus, growing in faith, growing closer to Christ, with a clear vision of the world and people as God sees them. Disciples who seek to use their God-given gifts to transform their communities and the world.

Early Methodists started a movement that was focused on growing as disciples, inviting others into a life following Jesus, and helping those in their communities that were hurting the most. At Discipleship Ministries, we believe that we need to get back to these basic understandings of church and discipleship, and back to a concern for improving systems that work for all God's children, moving us toward what God intends for all.

We invite you to explore the SeeAllThePeople suite of resources (www.seeallthepeople.org) designed to equip you and your church for intentional discipleship and community engagement. Although the forms and strategies change, the main goal of the church remains, to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. It will always be about discipleship!

Biblical and Theological Foundations

The apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Colossians:

[B]e filled with the knowledge of God's will, with all wisdom and spiritual understanding. We're praying this so that you can live lives that are worthy of the Lord and pleasing to him in every way: by producing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God. . . .

So live in Christ Jesus the Lord in the same way as you received him. Be rooted and built up in him, be established in faith, and overflow with thanksgiving just as you were taught. (Col 1:9-10; 2:6-7)

This passage is one way to describe the desired results of ministries with adults—wise, knowledgeable adults who are growing in the faith and who consistently demonstrate their love of God and neighbor.

Called to Lead

You have been called to work with other leaders in the church to fulfill the church's mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Research indicates that two of the primary drivers that have an impact on the vitality of congregations are small groups and effective lay leadership. As a leader of adult faith formation and discipleship, your ministry relates directly to both of these drivers. You have a unique responsibility to provide leadership in your congregation so that adults in all life stages are:

- beloved children of God;
- provided opportunities to relate to God through worship, prayer, acts of compassion, acts of justice, and other spiritual disciplines;
- nurtured in the faith through Bible study, mutual accountability, and other faith-forming practices;
- sent out as disciples of Jesus Christ to participate in God's transformation of the world.

The Book of Discipline states that the function of the local church “is to help people to accept and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to live their daily lives in light of their relationship with God” (§202). As the body of Christ, we are challenged to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people.

As a spiritual leader in your congregation, you will find support, courage, and wisdom through the Holy Spirit. As you engage individually and with others in adult faith formation and discipleship, you will experience God's grace and be empowered to lead other adults as they grow in faith.

Ministry Description

Your congregation will decide what kind of structure is needed to plan for adult discipleship. Some structures will be formal and ongoing, such as an Adult Council or Education/Nurture Team. Some structures may be informal and short-term, such as a task force formed to plan an older-adult retreat. Your position title may be coordinator of adult ministries, team leader for adult discipleship, coordinator of singles ministries, director of spiritual formation or faith formation, or some other title indicating that you are a leader in adult ministries. Regardless of your title, church size, or structure, this Guideline is designed to help equip you in leading adult ministries in your congregation. (Note: If you work with young adults, ages 18–30, please read *Guidelines 2025-2028: Ministry with Young People*.)

Your role is to keep the big picture of adult faith formation and discipleship in view and to help develop a comprehensive strategy appropriate for your context. Within those boundaries, your responsibilities may include:

- connecting the intentional discipleship system of your congregation with the needs of adults of all ages and life situations in your congregation and wider community.
- making sure the needs of adults of all ages and life situations are addressed and supported in the church's intentional discipleship system or in the creation of such a system.
- becoming familiar with the overall goals of your congregation and how the goals are achieved through the congregation's ministry with adults.
- identifying and articulating the needs of adults of all ages and life situations in your congregation and community.
- serving as liaison with organizations, people, and resources that relate to adults and their concerns for personal growth and service
- supporting and guiding the work of the Adult Council (or other structure) throughout the year, planning agendas, and presiding at meetings;
- helping to plan and carry out a varied and wide-ranging ministry with adults, including worship, study, fellowship, intergenerational events, and service

Where to Get More Help

You can consult these people or agencies for help:

- your pastor
- adults in your congregation and community
- your Church Council or other administrative body
- your annual conference staff, adult coordinator, or council
- Discipleship Ministries staff (see the Resources section)

opportunities connected with the larger intentional discipleship system of the church;

- communicating the goals and plans for ministries with adults of all life stages;
- reviewing and evaluating resources, curriculum, and programs that address the faith formation needs and passions of adults at various life stages and stages of faith;
- representing the vision of adult ministries on the Church Council, Administrative Board, and charge conference;
- encouraging teachers/leaders to provide resources for spiritual formation in daily life.

The Roles of the Adult Ministries Coordinator

Whether you are the coordinator of all adult ministries or a specific segment (single adults, older adults, and so forth), you fulfill a crucial role of leadership in the life of the congregation. Since adults comprise most members in most congregations, the work of the coordinator heavily influences the life of the church. Your position as leader can involve several roles.

Servant Leader

First and foremost, you are a servant leader. In the broadest sense, you serve as a leader for all adults in the congregation and as one partner to the lay leader. This position might lead an adult council or ministry team. It is also possible that you report to a group such as a discipleship team. Either way, you were chosen because you have exhibited the qualities needed for such an important position in your congregation.

A servant leader models openness to God and continues growing in the Christian faith. This role requires such skills as the ability to listen to the needs of others, compassion, discernment, and scriptural understanding. As a leader of adults, you have the privilege and opportunity to invite others to join in the journey. Helping adults become transformational disciples of Jesus Christ is an important role for the coordinator of adult ministries.

A servant leader understands and supports the mission of the church. It is important to participate actively in all aspects of the church's life. You work with the Church Council or similar administrative group to plan how your congregation fulfills the mission. As you work with other adults, you also build healthy relationships, balancing the concern for accomplishing a task with tending to the concerns of group members.

If you are leading the Adult Council (or committee or team), you set the pace by carefully planning the agenda, keeping members informed, involving members in decision-making, equipping and encouraging your team members to fulfill their agreed upon tasks, and seeking at all times to embody what it means to be a Christian disciple.

If you are reporting to a larger group, you are an advocate for the faith formation needs of adults of all ages. Adults at different life stages have different needs and challenges. It is important that you understand those and are able to articulate them to the necessary teams, boards, and staff persons.

Visionary

Helping to envision what is possible and what is needed is a crucial role. You will be called upon to “think big,” but at the same time not to lose touch with the realities of the situation. A vital part of our United Methodist theology is the desire “to go on to perfection.” One of your roles is to envision how adult faith formation and discipleship help adults strive to love God and love their neighbors in every aspect of their lives. You will help discern how and where God is calling adults to live and grow as God’s people in your specific context.

Advocate

The coordinator serves as an advocate for adults in the various groups that plan and administer the church’s ministry. You report to the Church Council or other administrative board on the goals of the Adult Council and advocate for adults who are left out or whose needs are being overlooked in church programming or in the community. Advocacy may take many forms, all the way from seeking more financial support for adult ministries and planning retreats for single parents to providing caring outreach to older adults in long-term care facilities.

Planner

You lead the Adult Council in planning ministries that will involve adults in worship, study, fellowship, service, and mission. You work with the Adult Council or in conjunction with another team to interpret and promote adult ministries within the context of the church’s mission, evaluate present ministries, identify additional needs, set priorities, enlist leaders, and implement plans. It can be helpful to be aware of personalities and generational ways of relating to one another to foster effective teams.

Equipper/Recruiter

You serve as a lookout and coach, as you identify potential leaders, invite them to assume specific responsibilities, and provide them with the support needed to serve effectively. As you consider the various opportunities offered for adults, identify the gifts needed to lead those opportunities. Then consider those who have the gifts, passion, and potential for leadership in the area of adult ministries.

Evaluator

A key to good leadership is the ability to evaluate what is happening in the present. Are the present ministries working effectively? Are they meeting needs? Are they focused on helping adults grow in faith and discipleship? Are they helping to fulfill the church’s ministry of intentional discipleship growth and engaging the community? Who is missing in our church? Who has started coming, or stopped coming, and why?

If you have questions about your role, consult with your pastor or chair of the Church Council. In addition to this Guideline, consult *The Book of Discipline* and other resources available through your church office or library.

Getting Started

How might a local church develop an intentional ministry among adults? While there is not a one-size-fits-all plan for every church or context, these general suggestions should apply.

A Five-Step Design

The following five steps will help you and your congregation design a ministry with, by, and for adults.

1. Organize a Ministry Team

If there is no Adult Council, begin looking for others who are especially interested in and share a passion for adult ministry. Review the names of people with your pastor and the Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development and consider the suggestions they make. This is a helpful step in identifying the right gifts and talents to serve on your team while also learning other ministry areas where an adult is already serving in a leadership capacity. Organize an adult ministry team with a cross section of all adults, including women and men; people who are single, married, divorced, and widowed; people representing a variety of ages and stages; people with disabilities; and people representing multiracial and multicultural diversity. After the adult ministry team is approved by the charge conference, the team should receive clarity regarding its relationship with the Church Council, Committee on Education, or other related committees. While some churches may just have one adult ministry team, others will have several teams (task forces, councils, or committees) organized around specific life stages or experiences. For example, a church might have a singles ministry team or an older-adult team.

2. Gather Information about Adults

The adult ministry team can collect information in a variety of ways: face-to-face interviews, telephone calls, focus groups, and surveys via email, your church's website, etc. With each adult's permission, record as much information as possible. Include: name, address, phone numbers, email, and other contact information; information about their needs as adults; information about ways they, as adults, can be in service to others. Organize this data into a secure and shareable database.

TIP

SurveyMonkey is a user-friendly tool for creating surveys that can be emailed, posted to your church's website, or distributed through Facebook and other social media. For information, see <https://www.surveymonkey.com>.

3. Identify Existing Ministries and Community Programs

Review and identify all church programs and activities for the previous year or two that involved adults of various life stages. You will want to know:

- the audience for each ministry (all adults, a specific generation, older adults, people new to the church, and so forth);
- the kind of activity involved in the ministry (worship, study, fellowship, or service);
- the duration of the ministry (one-time, short-term repeated, ongoing, and so forth);
- the outcomes planned for each ministry and how those outcomes were measured.

Use the chart “Opportunities for Intentional Discipleship with Adults” (available at www.UMOfficialResources.com/Guidelines) to help categorize ministry opportunities for adults at various life stages to show adults growing from being curious to becoming deeply mature disciples of Jesus Christ.

Also collect information about community programs, organizations, and activities that involve adults. A community organization might already be providing a program that successfully addresses a need of adults in your congregation. You may want to explore whether a partnership is desirable and feasible. Identify ways adults can be involved in community service.

4. Set Goals

Set S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals, clarify objectives, and help in the evaluation process. These can be helpful in explaining the direction of the adult committee to other church teams. Make sure these goals are in line with the overall goals of the church (especially as they relate to the church’s intentional discipleship system). In some discipleship systems or pathways, these goals can be referred to as outcomes.

5. Design Your Ministry

After gathering information about adults in your congregation and community, assessing current ministries, and setting goals, you are ready to begin planning. You may choose to plan seasonally, a year ahead, or even further. Pray first to listen to the Holy Spirit’s guidance. Your design should include:

- priorities for developing new ministries and continuing current ministries that best use your resources for nurturing adult faith and discipleship;
- benchmarks to measure your progress (see the Resources section for more information);
- goals and strategies for achieving ministry priorities, along with a timeline for each ministry opportunity;
- finances, resources, leaders, and facilities needed for the various ministry opportunities;
- plans for communicating and promoting adult ministry opportunities throughout the congregation and community;
- methods for evaluating the effectiveness of your plans.

Faith Formation and Discipleship in Adulthood

The word *adulthood* is amazingly succinct when you consider how many years of the lifespan it encompasses. We generally think of at least three stages of adulthood: emerging, middle, and older, and each of these stages has blurry boundaries. Each of these stages represents a number of developmental tasks for adults. We also know that adults have varying religious experiences and knowledge, as well as different understandings of religious language and traditions.

Generational theory adds another lens for considering how adults perceive themselves and the world as they go about their daily lives. Family Systems Theory may also be used to reflect upon how people act and react during their journey toward Christian perfection and spiritual maturity.

As a leader of adults, you will be providing opportunities for continued growth for new Christians, deeply committed Christians, and everyone in between. This Guideline specifically looks at these three aspects of adult faith formation and discipleship for emerging, middle, and older adults. If your responsibility also includes young adults, see *Guidelines 2025–2028: Ministry with Young People*.

Developmental Tasks in Adulthood

In the modern era, adulthood lasts much longer than in years past because of the extension of life expectancy. Adulthood is often marked by transition points (living alone, purchasing a home, marriage, children, financial independence, empty nests, grandparenting, retirement, and so on) that sometimes challenge faith, but also may encourage its greater growth. In today's world, these transition points can be nonsequential, meaning that they may not occur in a traditionally expected order. You can help adults of all ages grow toward spiritual maturity by providing caring and challenging opportunities for making sense out of their experiences in light of their

TIP

Throughout their lives, adults will experience change. Some are *expected changes*, as we move into another life stage:

- physical changes due to aging
- moving from active parenting to an “empty nest”
- retirement

However, some adults also experience *unexpected changes*, such as:

- loss of employment
- illness
- dementia
- divorce
- death of a child, spouse, or grandchild
- caring for adult parents
- raising grandchildren

Christian faith. Adults who participate actively in the full range of worship, learning, and mission opportunities through the church (the intentional discipleship system) will grow in faith and discipleship. In this fast-changing world, adults of all ages continue in the process of identity development: seeking, belonging, and discovering purpose.

Adulthood actually seems to have more to do with life experiences and responsibilities than an exact age. And often, there are a mixture of cultural, legal, and religious definitions for adulthood that can compete with each other in determining when someone is indeed “an adult” and recognized by the majority of others in their community as such. Some people experience the transition into young adulthood in their twenties, while others are still dealing with what are traditionally considered “young-adult issues” in their forties.

Emerging Adulthood

The period of adolescence appears to be extending, and the twenties and thirties are varied in terms of life experiences (career, education, marriage, divorce, children). Emerging adults tend to uphold the importance of selfhood and individuality as they seek out their identity, belonging, and purpose. Relationship boundaries tend to be vague. Religion is largely seen as unimportant or irrelevant to spirituality. A major task for emerging adults is learning to be financially, emotionally, and spiritually autonomous while at the same time recognizing there are parts of life that improve with the concept of interdependence. These years often include the need for a “ministry of firsts” as first jobs, first marriages, first children, first homes, first deaths, and so on can form a person’s perspective on the rest of their journey as adults. As of the writing of this resource, this broad category includes the oldest members of Generation Z and the younger members of Millennials.

Middle Adulthood

Because of the wide variety of life situations that are the norm for people at midlife, the issues they face are diverse. Generally speaking, people have completed their education and have established their homes and careers during middle adulthood. Many have been married at least once, though the average age of marrying continues to get older. A significant number have divorced and may or may not have remarried. They may be the parents of young children, adolescents, and/or young adults. Some have also become grandparents. During midlife, most people will experience the death of at least one parent and/or begin to care for and deal with the realities of aging parents. Most physical abilities peak in young adulthood and begin to decline modestly as people move into middle adulthood. As of the writing of this resource, this broad category includes the older members of the Millennial Generation as well as virtually all of Generation X.

At midlife, people begin to shift from thinking about how long they have lived to how long they have left to live. Making meaning of life is a major developmental task as people begin to ask, “So what difference does it make that I’ve been on this earth for 40 or 50 years?” while in the midst of what are often their “peak earning years” in terms of income.

Baby Boomers

Adults who came into adulthood in the 1960s, 70s, and early 80s are not one uniform group because their experience and the events of their emerging young adulthood varied substantially. Transitioning into older adulthood will occur at various times because of a variety of factors, such as health, the age of parents, and when they choose to retire. Some baby boomers were activists in movements attempting to change the world, so service ministry is attractive to them. Others learned to question institutions and authorities, including the church, and became unaffiliated with religion; ministry that includes spiritual practices and/or is related to social justice can be a link back to faith. Many adults 55 and older become health conscious, so fitness combined with social interaction becomes an important component in their lives; recreation and wellness are important ways to reach this group. (Goodbye racquetball, hello pickleball!) With better medicine and more active lifestyles, combined with the “youth culture” that they helped define as adolescents, members of the baby boom generation tend to resist viewing themselves as older adults – though as of the writing of this resource, the youngest of the Boomers are about 60 years of age.

Older Adulthood

Older adulthood can be a time of creative growth and development and a time of reinvention of identity. Some older adults are more active physically and intellectually than their children and grandchildren! For older adults, though, this stage of life is also a time of learning acceptance for limitations, processing losses, and coming to terms with approaching death for them and for loved ones.

Older adulthood can generally be described as having three phases: active older adulthood, paced older adulthood, and inactive older adulthood with limited mobility. Colloquially, these phases are often called “go go,” “slow go,” and “no go.” In the active phase, adults may be adjusting to reduced income, retirement, changes in health or the health of a spouse, death of a spouse, and establishing a new social network to replace a work network. In the later phases, adults may experience limited mobility, dementia, loss of autonomy, need for assistance and care, loneliness due to loss of family and friends, and the need to face the reality of death. Though more far-reaching than merely this group, social isolation has become a more significant issue.

Older adults are concerned with finding worth in being more than having or doing, claiming the life journey and faith story, confronting losses and acknowledging gains, dealing with independence and dependence, experiencing a new (or renewed) relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and serving the needs of others. The concept of *legacy* or “What I will leave behind” become factors in decision-making. As of the writing of this resource, this broad category contains nearly all of the Baby Boomer Generation, as well as those remaining from the Silent and Greatest/GI Generation.

Some of the faith needs of adults at this stage of life include the need to know that God loves them and to experience a community that cares about them. They need to serve as mentors and role models for succeeding generations, and they need support systems for coping with losses.

Older adults and those who love them may have to deal with Alzheimer's disease and other dementia. When older adults are homebound, the ministry that keeps them connected has to be intentionally and carefully planned. It requires the church to reach out to the homebound members rather than expecting the homebound to reach out to the church. Ministry to those who suffer from dementia, their loved ones, and their caregivers takes on many forms, including worship, respite care, and support groups.

Religious Experience of Adults

Because adults have varying experiences related to faith, congregations need to provide settings appropriate for their levels of experience. Some adults need to learn "the basics"; some adults need refresher courses. Other adults need to be challenged to move deeper into their relationship with God and in living out their faith at home, at work, and with their neighbors. Here are some ways to think about these different points along the spiritual journey.

Nones / Spiritual, but not Religious

Some adults have grown up without any religious affiliation and might see religious institutions as archaic or merely serving the purpose of self-help. Some have asked philosophical or faith-based questions, but never been part of a worshipping body. Some may see spirituality and spiritual practices as meaningful, but they may be divorced from religious organizations (thus the term *Spiritual, but not Religious*—SBNR). Some may see religious organizations as doing more harm than good.

Cautious

For some adults, faith in its institutional form is largely unexplored. They may show some interest, but they are unsure about what to expect. They may have had an earlier painful experience in a congregation or with an individual that was harmful; though mildly interested, they can still be distrustful.

Curious

These adults have sufficient interest to investigate the Christian faith. They are willing to engage in some way with a congregation, although they may not attend worship. Their first entry point might be a small group, mission, or fellowship event. Their attendance will often be the result of a friend intentionally offering hospitality by inviting their participation.

Committed (to Something)

Some adults are interested enough to participate regularly in some aspect of a congregation's life. Their commitment may not yet be to Christian discipleship; it may be commitment to the pastor, to a particular ministry, or to a group, such as the choir or a Bible study.

Professing

When adults respond to God's love and grace, they will take some initiative for learning about Christian spiritual practices and involvement in a church community. These adults

have recognized God’s presence in their lives and have made the decision to order their lives toward loving God and loving neighbor.

Inviting

These adults live a life of active discipleship. They take responsibility for being mentors and models with others. They are intentional about offering Christ and engaging in the world as they move toward a life that is entirely within the mind of Christ.

Various Opportunities

Regardless of age or religious experience, all adults need to be related to other people in meaningful ways. When relationships are strained or broken, adults face the need for support and healing. In times of crisis, the church can play an important role in caring, supporting, and healing. If you are seeking ways to reach out to adults outside of your church, learn about Fresh Expressions in the *Guidelines 2025–2028: Evangelism* and FXUM at <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/equipping-leaders/fresh-expressions>.

As a leader, you can use the above descriptors in planning. Someone who has no faith, is spiritual but not religious, or cautious will not necessarily respond to the same type of opportunity as those who have made professions of faith and are actively deepening their relationship with God. You will need to evaluate current ministries to determine the ways your congregation is offering opportunities for various stages of faith formation and discipleship. Adults of all ages may experience physical, psychological, or spiritual changes that can cause anxiety and may dramatically alter personal and family-life patterns. You will want to be sensitive to the wide range of personal changes going on in the lives of adults in your congregation.

Adult Developmental Characteristics

The chart that follows indicates some of the descriptors and issues of middle and older adults. Think of ways of ministering to the wide range of adults in your congregation as they work through these challenging times.

Adult Developmental Characteristics		
	Millennials & Gen X, & Midlife Adults	Boomers & Older Adults
Physical	Begin to measure time as “time until death”; coming to terms with mortality; midlife physical changes	Participation may be affected by hearing and sight losses; increasing health-care needs and chronic illnesses
Psychological	Developmental task: serving others vs. being self-absorbed; range of interests include career planning, personal growth, relationship development, problem solving, and values clarification	Developmental task: life has meaning vs. a life of regrets; adjustment to retirement; loss of relationships due to death; increasing dependence upon others; volunteerism and caregiving are important

Emotional	Managing midlife transitions, such as death of parents, children leaving home, parenting, and aging parents	Need to be valued, respected, and accepted by people and institutions
Intellectual	Self-directed learning; want to be involved in decisions about learning; want input from knowledgeable people, resources, and groups	Build on life experiences; use visual images and mental pictures to enhance learning; encourage self-paced and problem-centered learning activities
Spiritual	Want to understand the meaning of life and one's place in the world; focus on values and priorities; take responsibility for one's own spiritual journey	Want arena to grow in faith and make sense of life story; need purpose and to feel life is worth living; may want to share one's life faith story and to mentor others
Special Needs	Learning context is important; climate for learning and thinking; traumatic events or life transitions often prompt involvement in learning activities	Opportunities for continued growth; significant service vs. busy work; daytime activities and accessible surroundings; good lighting and acoustics
Gifts to Share	Dependability; steadiness; concern for the future	Wisdom; time; financial resources; life experiences; hope; acceptance of death
Vocation	Questioning; career changes; mentoring	Retirement from primary career; may reenter or reinvent work life
Expect of the Church	Want help in making meaning of life and finding balance	To be valued; place for friendships; opportunity to be of service to others; deepen spirituality

Generational Snapshots

The following information is compiled from research done primarily in the context of the United States. As the pace of technological change, 24-hour news cycles, and globalization have increased, the field of generational studies and theory has transformed from information that could be used to make general assumptions about people born within a 20–30-year timeframe into a constantly evolving flow of information and studies of *micro-generations* that may only last 3–5 years. Take the following observations as generalizations for the generations currently living in the United States. Pew Research, as well as groups like Barna, can be invaluable sources of data as the generations evolve. These sections are not comprehensive and should not be used to further generational conflicts. Rather, by learning about general trends, generations can learn the formational experiences that shaped general attitudes, beliefs, and approaches to life in other generations.

Generational Snapshot: Generation Z

Born between approximately 1997 and 2012, most of the young people in our churches are Gen Zers. In 2024, the youngest will be 12; the oldest, 27. They are deeply immersed in

the digital age, growing up with access to the internet, smartphones, and social media from a young age. These are true digital natives.

This generation is marked by its diversity, embracing inclusivity and progressive values more openly than previous generations. However, Gen Z also tends to reflect the polarizing trend of social and political opinion prevalent in culture, with Gen Z women trending toward more progressive social stances and Gen Z men trending toward more conservative social stances. Gen Zers are also characterized by their adaptability, creativity, and a strong sense of social and environmental responsibility. Their upbringing in the shadow of the global financial crisis has instilled financial caution in them. The COVID-19 pandemic stands out as a significant life event, impacting their formative years and potentially influencing their perspectives on health, work, and social interaction. The introduction of AI and other factors may upend the labor market, so uncertainty about jobs coupled with high costs of housing and student debt are influencing many of their decision-making processes and life choices, including marrying later in life, pursuing higher education, and whether or not to have children. Relationships are increasingly founded online, with the possibility that an online connection can become a friend in the physical world. This generation is also rediscovering skills and practices from the Silent Generation or Older Boomers (that younger Boomers may not have passed on due to the development of consumerism in their generation), pairing low-tech hobbies and pursuits (e.g., bread-baking, canning) with advanced social networking. This generation is discovering their political voice and beginning to vote. Shaped by COVID-19, January 6 Riots, Overturning of *Roe v Wade*, Israel/Hamas War, Russia/Ukraine War, AI (OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT (4) [Large language model], <https://chat.openai.com>).

Generational Snapshot: Millennials

Born between approximately 1982 and 1999, the members of the millennial generation began to enter young adulthood in 2000. In 2024, the youngest will be 25; the oldest, 42, so many young adults are millennials. Some in this generation are emerging into adulthood; others are young adults. If they have children, the odds are that Millennial parents are raising Generation Alpha, though some may have children in Gen Z.

Population

They have become the United States' largest living generation, slightly larger than Baby Boomers, Gen Z and Gen Alpha (for now). This is a very ethnically and racially diverse generation (56 percent white compared with 79 percent white with the Silent Generation) and will likely become the most educated generation in the United States. The trend toward greater diversity continues in younger generations. This generation was primarily parented by Baby Boomers.

Issues

This generation is the first to grow up in a world where technology—computers, cell phones, and television—has always been a driving force within the overall culture. As of

January 2024, 97 percent of Millennials owned a smart phone (76 percent for those aged 65 and older) (<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/mobile/>). “Screen time” has increased with smart devices and data access, as well as the development of social networks and other apps.

This generation often blurs the line between *parent* and *friend* with their Boomer elders. This has led to parents becoming much more active in the lives of their young-adult children. As compared to other generations, Millennials are less likely to be married and more likely to be renters rather than homeowners (<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/05/27/as-millennials-near-40-theyre-approaching-family-life-differently-than-previous-generations/>; <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/state-millennial-homeownership>).

Relationships, whether with family, friends, or colleagues, are at the center of this generation’s lifestyle. These relationships can be built and maintained online and in the physical world.

As one of the first generations to grow up in a completely *customizable* world, Millennials are often criticized by older generations as feeling entitled, expecting things to be given to them exactly as they want them. The concepts of customization, algorithms delivering content, and on-demand services took root in this generation and are being passed on to younger generations. When asked about perceptions of their own generation, Millennials tend to believe they can be self-absorbed, or colloquially have “main character syndrome.”

They are the least overtly religious American generation.

Employment and Social Engagement

- “[T]hey are relatively unattached to organized politics and religion, linked by social media, burdened by debt, distrustful of people, in no rush to marry—and optimistic about the future” (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood>).
- Driven to action for causes that they feel are worthwhile, Millennials’ social action is most often seen as a communal event, unlike the more individualistic Generation X.
- In 2016, Millennials became the largest generation in the labor force and continue to occupy that space. Some have experienced frustration as older generations have worked longer, limiting the upward mobility of traditional career paths.

Life Events

This generation has been shaped by the mass availability of internet connections and portable devices as well as the dangers of terrorism at home and abroad, including 9/11, and Iraq/Afghanistan, Elections of Barak Obama and Donald Trump, School shootings and systemic violence, Hurricane Katrina, Legalization of Gay Marriage.

Generational Snapshot: Generation X

Born between about 1965 and 1981, all those in this generation have transitioned from young adulthood to middle adulthood. In 2024, the youngest will be 42; the oldest, 59. This generation was primarily parented by older Baby Boomers and some of the Silent Generation.

Population

- They have been referred to as *postmoderns* or *baby busters*.
- There is an often-forgotten generation because they are wedged between Boomers and Millennials (the two largest generations in the current adult age span). This has led to a lack of cohesive generational identity.
- Some in this age range are happy to avoid the “generation bashing” that has become prevalent between Boomers, Millennials, and Gen Z.

Issues

- They tend to seek to experience life and work for themselves rather than being guided or prescribed a particular path to the answers.
- Community is expressed in terms of a small group as opposed to an identity within an overall faith community.
- This generation is increasingly being *sandwiched*, caring for both children and aging parents.

Attitudes

- Once thought of as a slacker generation, Generation X members express a more laid-back approach to the world than their Boomer predecessors. However, this generation now is perceived more as responsible, hard-working, and self-reliant.
- Seeing corporate and moral decay in the culture around them, many postmoderns have developed distrust for authority (and in many cases, by extension, institutions as a whole). This is a trend for generations younger than X as well. Gen X will buy from and support companies and brands that are consistent with their beliefs, as will younger generations.
- While mission and service rank high in the postmodern value system, they are seen as individual events. The postmodern individual is likely to say, “If the world is going to change, I have to be the one to do it,” which can lead to burnout or disillusionment with larger-scale issues.

Education and Employment

- Sixty percent of Generation X at least attended college.
- They often have a work hard/play hard mentality. They are more likely to affirm that they work to live rather than live to work.
- They are the first generation where the labor market demands postsecondary education for economic success, and they have more debt than other generations.

Life Events

The explosion of the space shuttle Challenger is a formational event for this generation, as was the fall of the Berlin Wall and the rise of the personal computer. Iraq/

Afghanistan War, Election of Barack Obama, Columbine School Shooting, Legalization of Gay Marriage (based on “Generational Snapshots: Postmoderns & Millennials” © 2007 Discipleship Ministries. Also www.pewresearch.org and <http://www.people-press.org/2011/11/03/section-1-how-generations-have-changed>).

Generational Snapshot: Baby Boomers

Born between approximately 1946 and 1964, this large generation represents people currently moving into older adulthood. By the end of 2024, all members of the Baby Boomer Generation will be 60 years of age and the oldest will be 78. While most Baby Boomers can be categorized as older adults, many, if not most, do not self-identify as older adults. This is not surprising given that “youth culture” developed during the Boomers’ adolescent ages. If you brand your ministry by/with/for those above age 65 as being for “older adults” do not be surprised that Baby Boomers will perceive this as a ministry for people older than they are.

Wellness

- Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death among Boomers; rates of cancer and suicide are higher among Boomers than in other generations.
- About 40 percent of Boomers suffer from diabetes, and many are overweight.
- Many Boomers are concerned with fitness and maintaining a youthful appearance, but also need to combat inner ageism.

Life Events

- More than 50 percent of Boomers have been divorced; that is more than any other generation.
- Thirty-six percent of Boomers have lost a job; 45 percent have had multiple careers; and about 10 percent have retired already. Boomer retirement is changing, with some Boomers choosing to continue to work rather than retire.
- Aging parents are a concern for many Boomers. They may be wholly or partially responsible for the care of aging parents. About 50 percent have lost a parent or parents.

Attitudes

- Boomers have not given up trying to change the world, but they may have tempered the desire somewhat. Making the world better is still a concern, though better *how* and better *for whom* are significant topics with younger generations.
- A growing portion of this generation mistrust authorities, institutions, or others in power.
- Boomers are idealists and optimistic about their abilities to change or improve themselves and others.
- As Baby Boomers age, they resist being called *seniors* or *old*. Many Boomers think of *older adults* as their parents’ generation.

- Boomers are performance-driven and oriented toward self-improvement. This can be a challenge in retirement.
- Boomers are active on social media, and have taken over on some sites. Generally, their social networks have become ways to connect with not only extended family but also peers and news sources. Misinformation, disinformation, scams, and algorithms are affecting many aspects of online engagement with Boomers. About 671,000 grandparents aged 65 or over maintain households in which grandchildren are present, providing opportunities for intergenerational interactions.

Employment

- Baby Boomers are putting off retirement longer than did previous generations and some continue to be employed. Staying consistent with their trend to redefine stages of life, many are seeking to redefine retirement.

Money

- Baby Boomers are both the nation's biggest spenders and biggest debtors.
- They are heavily affected by rapidly increasing healthcare costs.

Issues

- Boomers experience pre-retirement and post-retirement stress and depression.
- As they age, Boomers are undergoing a change of roles, status, and identity.
- Some Boomers are experiencing early onset dementia in themselves or in partners, spouses, and friends.
- Boomers struggle with finding balance in their lives and with coming to terms with unfulfilled dreams and expectations, or they may have fulfilled dreams that failed to live up to expectations.

Generational Snapshot: Silent

Members of the silent generation were born between approximately 1915 and 1945. In 2024, this group (79+ years in age) will include those who have witnessed more changes in their lives than any other generation.

Population

- There are more than 80,000 people who are at least 100 years old in the United States.
- There are 72 men for every 100 women in this age group.
- Women reaching the age of 65 can expect to live another 19.8 years (nearly 85). Men reaching the age of 65 can expect to live another 16.8 years (nearly 82).

Living Arrangements/Family

- Of householders, 75 percent own houses, and 20 percent are renters.
- About 31 percent (10.7 million) of older adults live alone (7.9 million women and 2.8 million men).
- More than 10 million elderly, or nearly one-third of the older-adult population, need some type of long-term care. Only 12 percent will reside in nursing centers in their lifetimes.
- Fifty-four percent are married and living with a spouse.
- Loss of relationships and networks brought on by death or change of location is significant.

Health

- The leading cause of injuries (and death) among this group of people is falling down (<https://www.seniorliving.org/research>).
- Twenty-six percent indicate that their health is fair or poor.
- Transportation might be an issue for churches to consider as well as ministering to those experiencing a loss of independence.
- Many struggle with coming to terms with death, death of loved ones, accumulated loss and grief, as well as depression and feelings of self-worth.
- Those over the age of 85 have the highest rate of suicide compared with any other age group. The rate for white males in this category is about four times higher than other ages.

Life Experience

- More than 5.3 million older adults remain active in the workforce after retirement age. That number will increase to 10 million by 2030.
- Older adults make up 12 percent of the nation's business owners.
- Major income sources are Social Security (90%), income from assets (56%), private pensions (30%), government pensions (14%), and earnings (23%).
- The poverty rate among this generation is about 10.1 percent.
- Though not as tech savvy as younger generations, a large percent of those above the age of 75 own a smartphone or digital communication device, and over 60 percent use the internet.

Life Events

- War: World War II and the cold war were important events for this generation, along with: the Korean War. JFK assassination, moon landing, and the tech revolution: radio to b&w TV to color TV to cable to internet.
- The Great Depression occurred in the childhood of this generation, influencing their approach to money and resources.

Settings for Adult Faith Formation and Discipleship

Opportunities in Various Settings

An intentional and comprehensive system for forming adult faith and discipleship is crucial for the vitality of congregations and fulfilling the mission of the church. Keeping in mind the various characteristics of adults, your plan needs to include opportunities that help adults grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. Consider the following elements for your plan. In today's hyperconnected world, there are various geographically based and online ways to engage adults.

Study

Study settings for faith formation are an essential ministry of the local church and should be high in your priorities for adult ministry. Christian education and formation settings may include Sunday school classes, weekday Bible study (such as DISCIPLE), short-term classes on specific topics of current interest, workshops, leader training, and various small groups. Learning is central to discipleship formation and growth.

Spiritual Growth

Settings such as spiritual-growth groups and similar opportunities are at the heart of the church's ministry. Helping adults practice spiritual disciplines, such as prayer and Christian conversation, provides the daily support adults need to deepen their relationship with God and neighbor. Small groups for spiritual development provide adults with opportunities to tell their faith stories, and they offer accountability. Events such as the Walk to Emmaus (<http://emmaus.upperroom.org>), Face-to-Face (for many Boomers and older adults), or the Academy for Spiritual Formation (<http://academy.upperrom.org>) help to deepen faith and lead to other opportunities for Christian spiritual support and growth. Offer experiential environments for spiritual renewal and formation both for individuals and families.

Fellowship

Fellowship settings are equally important in adult ministry. The church offers a special kind of fellowship that cannot be found in just any group or organization. As the body of Christ, we are concerned about one another so that when "one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it," and when "one part gets the glory, all the parts celebrate with it" (1 Cor 12:26). Adults need to feel cared for, and they need to care for others. Adults grow in grace through

community engagement and acts of mercy just as much as through acts of piety (Scripture reading, prayer, and so on). Acts of mercy offer opportunities for spiritual growth and are another vital way that adults grow in grace.

Fellowship opportunities may be especially significant for single adults of all ages, adults who live alone, families with young children, and older adults who may be cut off from other family members and former work colleagues. Fellowship can also be an important factor in demonstrating how the life of the church can be different than a very polarized and lonely culture surrounding that church body.

Support and Accountability

Support and accountability settings provide growth opportunities in safe, nurturing environments where adults encourage, support, and hold one another accountable within the challenges of daily living and Christian discipleship. These groups offer settings where adults discuss life experiences and reflect from a faith perspective on relationships, health issues, career and professional choices, vocational transitions, and life-stage transitions. Churches often host support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, Support Recovery, and others both as accountability types of groups and as a service to the community.

Activities may range from informal discussion groups to structured methodical gatherings with specialized instructions or instructors. Covenant Discipleship Groups are one example of structured accountability groups that focus on Christian discipleship (see *Guidelines 2025–2028: Small Group Ministries* for more information). Regularly scheduled gatherings, consistent attendance, and active participation are crucial.

Mission and Service

Mission and service opportunities are a critical component of living as disciples of Christ in the community and world. Adult disciples are in ministry in their daily lives through relationships with family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. They may also be involved in specific outreach projects sponsored by your congregation. Some avenues of service may include outreach ministries such as prison ministry, Meals on Wheels, feeding the hungry, visiting the homebound and those in nursing homes or long-term care facilities, and tutoring children and youth (see *Guidelines 2025–2028: Mission* for more information). Others include social justice ministries such as advocating for and with marginalized groups, promoting faithful stewardship of creation and resources (see *Guidelines 2025–2028: Church and Society* for more information).

Mission and service opportunities may be domestic (such as Habitat for Humanity) or international (such as Volunteers in Mission work). Coordinate this ministry with your Mission/Outreach Council or chair. Mission and Service opportunities can also be inter-generational, so that parents, children, and extended family can serve together.

Online

Adults of all ages are online and engaged in social media. Churches can look for ways to leverage these media to engage faith formation with adults in a variety of ways, from

podcasting the sermon to Facebook groups to hosting online Bible studies. While online platforms can provide supplemental areas for communication and group meetings, adults should also be made aware of how constant connectivity can negatively affect their spiritual formation. While churches should explore ways to connect to adults through the growing opportunities made more readily accessible through cheaper technologies curating theological content, churches would also be wise to note how such platforms affect Christian identity and formation.

Use the “Settings for Adult Faith Formation” chart (available at www.UMOfficialResources.com/Guidelines) to help you think through various opportunities your church might offer adults as they grow toward mature discipleship in your unique context. (While you will want to know how many people are served, this inventory is for planning in the different settings.)

List the various settings you offer for adults of various ages and life circumstances. You may want to add notes about frequency, what percentage of the congregation is involved, and any thoughts you have about improvement.

The chart provides space to record ministry opportunities in each setting category—study, spiritual growth, fellowship, support and accountability, mission and service, and online—for each adult grouping in your congregation.

Start New Classes and Groups

Consider the following questions if you think you may need to start new adult classes or small groups. If you answer yes to any of the following questions, then the time may be ripe to act on your inclination.

- Do fewer than 50 percent of your adult members attend Sunday school or participate in other small groups?
- Do you have at least six to eight people who might be interested in looking at a particular topic or issue?
- What recent members have not been incorporated into existing classes or groups?
- Do you have several people who are not able to attend current small-group offerings because the meeting times conflict with work or other obligations? Might there be a way to use online settings to facilitate conversations to meet their needs? Might there be a way for groups to meet online to supplement times when they meet in person so as to not meet in person as much (which can save on babysitting and costs for the church)?
- Are several people currently going through similar life transitions (e.g., divorce, death of a spouse, birth of a child, job loss) who may need support or idea sharing?

When Launching a New Group:

- identify potential members;
- identify potential leaders and offer training;
- determine areas of need and interest, as well as preferred meeting times and dates;
- send personal invitations to potential members;
- publicize the time, day of the week, and location for the group;
- provide needed support and ask for feedback.

Measures, Evaluation, and a Final Word

While much of your responsibility entails planning and implementing adult faith-formation opportunities, an equally important aspect of your role is to measure how effectively the opportunities that are offered actually promote and deepen adult faith and commitment to living as disciples of Jesus Christ. There are several aspects to measurement and evaluation. Each of these reflects a different facet of adult faith formation; yet each is rooted in the mission of the church: making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. You will want to keep this mission in mind every time you engage in any aspect of measurement and evaluation.

Measure Participation

One of the basic measurements involves numerical data. You will want to know how many adults are taking advantage of the ministry opportunities offered by your congregation. There should be a system for recordkeeping already in place. If there is not, work with the Adult Council or other ministry team to establish one. This system should include:

- names of each class, small group, service opportunity, and other settings for adult faith formation;
- information about each setting for adult faith formation: how often the group meets, when it meets (day and time), how long it meets, and where it meets;
- number of new ministry settings offered during the year;
- number of participants for each adult faith-formation setting;
- number of leaders for each adult faith-formation setting;
- percentage of adults in the congregation who participate in some setting for adult faith formation and discipleship;
- percentage of adults in the congregation who serve as leaders in some setting for adult faith formation and discipleship;
- whether and how many times small groups have engaged in mission opportunities;
- comparison of numerical data for the past five years.

TIP

Check with your church office to find out if the church uses a software system for maintaining attendance records. There may be a way to add information about which settings for faith formation and discipleship adults participate in, when they attend, and so forth. This can facilitate your recordkeeping.

Measure Effectiveness

As you work with your Adult Council and/or other teams, you will develop a shared understanding of what it means for adults to mature in faith and live as disciples of Jesus Christ. Each opportunity for ministry should support this vision of Christian maturity. Remembering the varying religious experiences of adults, you will offer some settings that cover “the basics,” while other settings are designed for those who desire to deepen their relationship with God and who are looking for ways to live out their faith in their daily lives. The Disciple Dashboard can be a helpful tool in your measurement. Disciple Dashboard is a congregational data dashboard that provides an opportunity to set goals, collect essential data and reflect on ministry. Information is available at <http://umcdiscipleship.org/Disciple-Dashboard>.

An Intentional Discipleship System: A congregation-wide intentional discipleship system will promote growth that includes information, formation, and transformation. To think about how effectively your current adult formation settings demonstrate this movement, consider and record your responses to the Measuring Effectiveness Chart (available at www.UMOfficialResources.com/Guidelines).

Using your list of settings for adult faith formation in your congregation, make notes about how these settings develop knowledge and skills and provide meaningful experiences for adults. It could be helpful to identify which aspect (knowledge, skills, or experiences) is primary for each setting. You can then identify gaps to address.

One of the easiest ways to obtain this information is to survey participants in adult faith-formation settings. At the end of a short-term study or experience, or at least once a year for ongoing settings, distribute questionnaires that ask participants to reflect on their experience. (You can also email these questionnaires or provide a way for adults to respond via your congregation’s website.) The questionnaires do not need to be long or highly detailed. Here are sample questions to ask:

- What was the most helpful part of this class/group/experience?
- Would you recommend this class/group/experience to another person? Why or why not?
- What revisions could improve this class/group/experience?
- What other classes/groups/experiences would be most helpful for you as you continue to grow in faith and live as a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- What spiritual gifts have been evoked or nurtured?
- In what ways are your Christian life and faith different because of your experience with and participation in your class/group/experience?
- You can also ask adults to rate settings according to a scale (1=high dissatisfaction and 4=high satisfaction). You can ask about content, leadership, facilities, and schedule, as well as spiritual growth.

Measure Appropriateness

You will also want to evaluate whether the settings that are currently offered are what is needed for the adults in your context to grow in faith and discipleship. It’s been said that

the *seven last words* of the church are “We have always done it that way.” That may be true, but it’s not particularly helpful. Part of your ministry responsibility is not only asking, “How well are we doing what we’re doing?” but also, “Should we be doing this in the first place?”

The standards you have identified related to faith maturity serve as the benchmarks for responding to that question. Additionally, you will take into consideration resources and leadership needed to determine the feasibility of continuing or beginning a setting for ministry. With your Adult Council and/or other ministry team, discuss whether the opportunities you offer are clearly designed to help adults grow in faith. If some are not, then ask yourselves whether you need to continue investing time and energy into those settings.

A Final Word

You’ve had an opportunity to think about your congregation and community, as well as the middle and older adults who are involved or who could be involved in faith formation. The preceding pages have included a lot of information and asked many questions. As a way of reflecting on the information and questions, take some time to record some of your important ideas about next steps (see “Next Steps Worksheet,” available at www.UMOfficialResources.com/Guidelines):

- The church’s vision for an intentional discipleship system is . . .
- My vision or hope for our congregation’s adult faith formation is . . .
- This vision for adult faith formation has the potential for transforming the lives of adults in our congregation and community in these ways . . .
- People who are potential partners in this ministry include . . .
- Areas that need to be addressed in our intentional discipleship system include . . .
- To make my vision a reality, I will take the following steps (include dates) . . .

Your job as coordinator of adult ministries can make a difference in many lives. If you start to feel overwhelmed, remember that when God calls us to a challenging task, God also offers us the strength and guidance to perform the task. You are part of a connectional church; there are people you can contact and a variety of resources to support you in a vital adult ministry (see the Resources section).

May God bless you and your congregation as you help adults grow in faith and live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Resources

****Indicates our top picks**

*****Developing an Intentional Discipleship System: A Guide for Congregations*** by Junius B. Dotson (Discipleship Ministries, <https://www.seeallthepeople.org/resources-downloads>).

*****Engaging Your Community: A Guide to Seeing All the People*** by Junius B. Dotson (Discipleship Ministries, <https://www.seeallthepeople.org/resources-downloads>).

Discipleship Ministries

Toll-free phone (877) 899-2780 (note specific extensions); web: <http://www.umcdiscipleship.org>

Rev. Motoe Yamada Foor, director of adult discipleship; ext. 1738; email: myamadafoor@umcdiscipleship.org.

Rev. Dr. Lisa Jean Hoefner, coordinator of older adult ministries; email: lj.hoefner.umcdiscipleship@gmail.com

Planning Adult Ministries

*****Aging and Ministry in the 21st Century: An Inquiry Approach***, Richard H. Gentzler Jr. (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2008).

An Age of Opportunity: Intentional Ministry by, with, and for Older Adults, Richard H. Gentzler Jr. (Discipleship Resources, 2018).

Baby Boomers and Beyond: Tapping the Ministry Talents and Passions of Adults Over 50, Amy Hanson (Jossey Bass, an imprint of Wiley, 2010). A foundational guide into boomers and being in ministry to, for, and with boomers.

Designing an Older Adult Ministry, Richard H. Gentzler Jr. (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1999). For equipping local congregations in developing and maintaining intentional older-adult ministries.

*****Living Fully, Dying Well Planning Kit***, Bishop Rueben P. Job (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006). Designed to assist adults preparing for meeting life's most important moments. Resource contains leader guide, participant workbook, and DVD.

Ministry with the Forgotten: Dementia through a Spiritual Lens, Kenneth L. Carder (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2019). Advocating for an inclusive ministry that

recognizes contributions from those living with dementia and challenges how churches can foster a community for communal-based discipleship.

Remembering Your Story: Creating Your Own Spiritual Autobiography, Richard L. Morgan (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2002). Leader guide and participant workbook for helping people create spiritual autobiographies.

Safer Sanctuaries®: Nurturing Trust within Faith Communities, Discipleship Resources (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2012). Joy Thornburg Melton, an attorney and a former minister, offers valuable, practical advice to help churches reduce the possibilities for abuse and exploitation of elders.

Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults, Christian Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). In-depth research about emergent adulthood and their attitudes regarding religion and spirituality.

The Gift of Years: Growing Old Gracefully, Joan Chittister (Katonah NY: BlueBridge, 2010). Great resource for discussion and support groups wanting to embrace older age as a natural part of life with blessings and challenges.

The Inner Work of Age: Shifting from Role to Soul, Connie Zweig (Rochester, Vermont: Park Street Press, 2021). A great guidebook recognizing that with extended longevity comes opportunities for extended personal growth and spiritual development.

The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation edited, John Roberto (Naugatuck: Lifelong Faith Publications, 2015). Explores new research into four categories of Adulthood: Young, Midlife, Mature, and Older as well as faith formation programming for each.

Web Resources

**Teaching and teacher helps: www.umcdiscipleship.org.

**Curriculum resources: www.cokesbury.com, (800) 251-8591.

"A Comprehensive Plan for Teacher Development," https://gbod-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy/Christian_Education/Comprehensive-Plan-for-Teacher-Development-for-United-Methodist-Congregations.pdf.

"Intentional Faith Development: Establishing Standards for Christian Formation and Discipleship," <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/intentional-faith-development>.

"Support for dementia care ministries or to get started," www.lovingthroughdementia.org

UMC Agencies & Helpful Links

The United Methodist Church, www.umc.org

General Commission on Archives and History, www.gcuh.org, Madison, NJ,
973-408-3189

General Board of Church and Society, www.umcjustice.org, Washington, DC, 202-488-5600

United Methodist Communications, www.resourceumc.org/communications, www.umns.org, Nashville, TN, 615-742-5400; InfoServ 1-800-251-8140

General Board of Discipleship, www.umcdiscipleship.org, Nashville, TN, 877-899-2780; Discipleship Resources, <http://bookstore.upperroom.org>; The Upper Room, <http://www.upperroom.org>.

General Board of Finance and Administration, www.gcfa.org, Nashville, TN

General Board of Global Ministries, www.umcmmission.org, Atlanta, GA, 800-862-4246

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, www.gbhem.org, Nashville, TN, 615-340-7413

General Commission on Religion and Race, www.gcorr.org, Washington, DC, 202-495-2949

General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, www.gcsrw.org, Chicago, IL, 1-800-523-8390

General Commission on United Methodist Men, www.gcumm.org, Nashville, TN, 615-340-7145

The United Methodist Publishing House, www.umph.org, www.abingdonpress.com, www.cokesbury.com, www.ministrymatters, Nashville, TN, 615-749-6000

United Women in Faith, www.uwfaith.org, New York, NY, 212-682-3633

Wespath (retirement/benefits), www.wespath.org, Glenview, IL, 800-851-2201

For additional resources, contact your annual conference office.