

Six things church can do now to connect with young people

The Church, as an all-age community of grace, has a long history of making a difference among young people. These have been challenging times though! Many churches feel they have lost connection with young people; although there are also stories of what the connection to and contact with the church has meant. These six ideas are offered as ways of connecting and reconnecting.

Meet and greet

If you are out (for exercise or shopping), keep your eyes open for the young people from your community. Smile, and say hello!

Making contact

If you know young people, be in touch. Personal contact makes a huge difference. A phone call or card is worth much more than an email.

Hosting a gathering

Bring young people together with an online gathering. Being together, listening to one another and having fun matters.

Spiritual space

Invite young people to an online quiet gathering. Create a space for prayer and peace.

The worship service

Invite (and support) young people to contribute to the service. Create an online service that doesn't accidentally model one that is by adults for adults.

Making a difference

Talk to young people about the way in which church makes a difference. Find out where young people are making a difference. Consider how everyone can work together.

See next page for more detail on each idea.

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Meet and greet

Don't underestimate the effect of a greeting, even from a distance. There is no pressure to have a long conversation.

It's surprising how many people react anxiously to teenagers, or even cross the road to avoid them.

A smile and a hello means a lot... even more so when you can greet the person using their name.

One lovely story that we heard about was of a mum who knows a number of young people in her neighbourhood. She walks her children back from their primary school on a route that means she sees them to say hello.

Making contact

How are you doing? We've missed you.

What can we be praying for?

There have been lovely stories of how much teenagers and their families have appreciated the church being in contact. Email does not work well for young people, and generic communication gets lost in the mass of information. Taking the time to connect says a lot.

"I'd have gone crazy without the support of our youth leader." Girl aged 15

[Here's](#) the experience of one church and how they contacted young people during lockdown

Hosting a gathering

Although lockdown makes this more challenging, the chance for contact and community is often even more appreciated. The best gatherings flow from conversations with young people. They can discuss what they would like to happen. However the event comes about, invite personally – don't rely on publicity alone.

Plan how you will host the meeting. You could do something together, such as cake baking over Zoom (send out a recipe and ingredient list in advance). You could play an online game such as [Skribbl.io](#). Use break-out rooms in Zoom for small groups to discuss a question, and then regroup to hear from each other.

[Further resources and ideas](#)

Spiritual space

With young people often at the sharp end of anxiety or depression, we can offer them the deep blessing that comes from Christian prayer practices. A recent piece of research by Young Minds of 2,000 young people with mental health needs reports that 51% indicate that lessons on mental health and wellbeing would be useful.

Contemplative prayer is an offering we have, a way of stepping out of our over-anxious minds and into a deeper connection with God, with ourselves and with others.

[Find contemplative practices with instructions and a script](#)

The worship service

Talk to young people about what helps them connect with worship, and what makes them feel disconnected. Ask their advice on how the service could better engage with them. How does the church service model that it is an all-age community of grace?

Interview a teenager about their experience of lockdown and beyond. Offer them a meaningful opportunity to contribute to the service.

Making a difference

With lockdown upon us again there are challenges to our activities making a difference in the community and beyond, but it is still happening.

Are there ways that young people can help, support and bring their talents to what you do? Invite them!

Talk to teenagers about campaigns and causes they are passionate about. Find out how the church can help and support them in the ways they are making a difference.