

The Anonymous Findings from Pastoral Interviews

Part 2 Current Status

Young Adult Ministry in the District

Levels of Targeting

The first objective was to collect data on how many of the Assemblies are currently and purposely involved in reaching young adults as well as to gain insight into just how many young adults are a part of our congregations. Through the interviews, it was discovered that churches have a range of young adults from ten to three hundred in attendance, on some sort of regular basis. The median number for our interviewed churches was twenty. This means that in the mass of data, twenty was the numerical center of our numbers.

Among those interviewed nearly one third (F=9) said they did not have anything in place for ministering to young adults. When asked what was their greatest challenge in this area was, some pointed to the fact that they did not have a key person in their congregation who could passionately invest sufficient time with young adults. Others said they felt disconnected to this age group and found it difficult to come up with meetings and events that were of interest to them. Some said they simply had no young adults in their congregations to attract other young adults.

Among the pastors who were interviewed, thirty percent (f=8) said they had a minimal amount of activities going on for young adults. In these churches, small groups involving this age group had developed without consciously being targeted from the side of church leadership. Young adult Sunday school classes, monthly coffee houses,

sporadic worship services and occasional outreaches were among the available activities.

Young adult ministry was not a priority or conscious ministry target of the church.

Another thirty-three percent (f=9) of those interviewed said that they did have some ministry specifically designed for this age group (see appendix G). In these churches they often had key leaders in place or even full time workers who could devote large quantities of time to targeting young adults. Some of their activities include thematic Bible studies, area worship services, consistently organized activities, campus presence, friendship circles, community service, and mission trips.

Triumphs and Challenges

When asked which things pastors could point to as triumphs, in the area of young adult ministry, the pastors pointed to several things. In churches where they have: key leaders to head up the areas, services that young adults find relevant, effective networking, college graduates who stay in their churches and young adults who become part of those who serve long term in church, the pastors felt they were experiencing triumphs.

Limited finances and active leaders have been mentioned as key hindrances to reaching this age group. Pastors and their leadership feel challenged when they must start from scratch, meaning they have absolutely no one in this age group who they can start training to reach their peers. In other words, they think having at least a few young adults, makes it easier to attract other young adults. They also feel challenged on how to meet the various needs of this age group. Single young adults, singles with children, young couples, young couples with children, and singles who are divorced, comprise this group.

This is a great challenge when trying to develop worship services, classes, outreaches, and social activities for this age group.

Many pastors have expressed the struggle of finding the balance between being relevant while not driving away older people. Another challenge was the impression that many in this age group will not commit to meetings, outreaches, and overall leadership. Pastors expressed concerns over the impression that they can get some young adults to gather for a period of time, but then, after a while, they appear to go where the next “happening” is taking place. Others who are from previous generations find it difficult to get inside the thinking process of these young people and acknowledge the development of a worldview that is foreign to them.

The Local Campus

The pastors were asked how their churches generally viewed the college campus, if they had one in their area. A few said they pray for their campus. A couple of churches said that they do outreaches on their campus one or two times per year. Other churches send workers to the campus to pass out invitations to “bridge” events, which are meetings that are not necessarily evangelistic in nature but rather designed for relationship building. One church said they have spent thousands of dollars through the years on campus outreach but have not seen long term results. The lack of long term effectiveness on the local campus creates great frustration. Others try to support campus ministries either financially or morally. Several pastors expressed the opinion that they often think about the campus but do not find it easy to help church members to understand the value of the investment of time, energy, and finances. However, the pastors themselves see it as a strategic mission field.

Felt and Expressed Needs to Get the Job Done

When asked what pastors felt they needed to do to effectively reach the young adults in their communities, over forty-six percent (f=13) of them said that they needed either a full-time staff person who could do the job or a trained and committed lay-person. Most preferred the idea of a full-time paid person for the task.

Others said they needed the finances to be released so they could invest in this area. Someone suggested the value of having short-term mission teams which could come and help facilitate such programs in the local churches. These ministries could help them find the initial key persons in their area so they could eventually start a group themselves.

Several suggested the importance of awareness-training and education as to the value of reaching this age group. They also desired training on how to better understand this age group. This training and education could be done for the pastors and/or lay leaders. This training could be held at local churches, at the district camp or at facilities convenient for several churches to assemble in a specific area.

On the local level, many felt having a neutral and inviting facility such as an off-site coffee house or meeting room would be helpful. They expressed the belief that a neutral meeting place could be important when specifically targeting un-churched young adults. It would get the Christians beyond the walls of the church into the marketplace.

The Chi Alpha Missionary

The pastors were asked how they view the XA missionary. Of the comments made, close to one third (f=9) of the pastors responded positively. These were often made by younger pastors who were new to the district and have contact with a small number of XA missionaries who are currently working here. Although they are presently few in

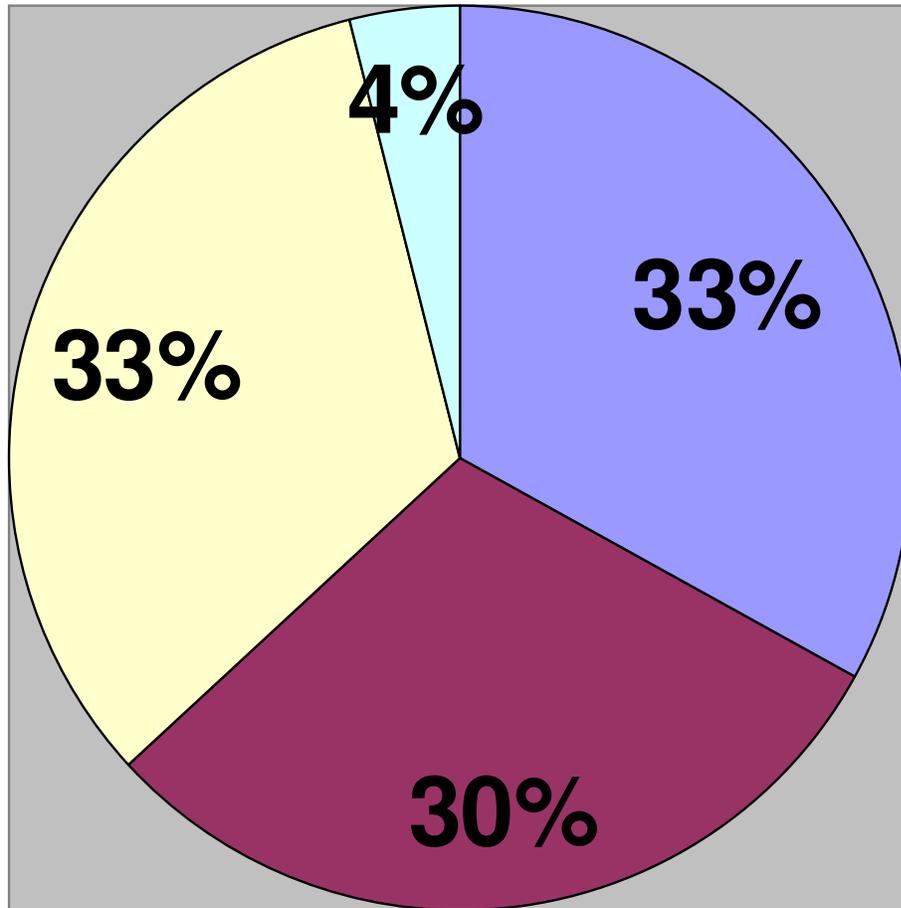
number, nonetheless those who are serving here are building a very good rapport with pastors. One couple is on staff at one of the district's large churches, serving as a ministry outreach of the church and training local church members. Many pastors have expressed looking forward to partnering with XA in the future, and they are genuinely glad they are on the campuses, making the gospel relevant and discipling students. Several acknowledged the importance of drawing from one another's strengths.

Sixty three percent (f=17) of the comments from the pastors about XA missionaries were negative. Many of these comments were based on the past history of XA in the district. Several of them said that, although they think the national XA has good materials and noble goals, yet they have not been impressed with its history in our district. Some pastors expressed concerns that some of the workers were very young and had limited life experience. They did not seem to interface well with the local church, and they had very high budgets with little accountability. One pastor felt this was a result of a poor screening process on the national level. Some felt the missionaries had come through training programs while they were on the college campus but they were not necessarily part of the local assembly, and as such did not interface well with the local church. Others expressed concern over how quickly the missionaries have come and gone. Some were bewildered that some came declaring how they were "called" to the campus, needed to raise their budget, and then left within a short time. Chi Alpha had traditionally run parallel to the church which made it difficult for some pastors to convince their boards of the validity of the method. Forty eight percent (f=13) of those interviewed expressed the desire to have the XA missionary work more closely with the local church. Over fifty-percent (f=14) expressed the concern that investing in XA when

it was not connected closely to the local church did not seem to bear long-term fruit. Ten-percent (f=2.7) felt they could not comment on this question as they did not have any contact with Chi Alpha missionaries.

APPENDIX G

LEVELS OF YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY TARGETING



- **Actively Targeting Young Adults. f = 9**
- **Minimally Targeting young Adults. f = 8**
- **Not Targeting young Adults. f = 9**
- **No Response. f = 1**