

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 7/15/2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

Lately I've been thinking a lot about church growth and direction. Actually, I think about these things all the time, but I have been especially lately. So, I've decided to share some of those thoughts with you that you might be more aware of the dynamics of the church, present and future.

One of the main reasons for the decline in worship attendance, especially among younger adults has to do with the change in values from previous generations. Millennials (born leading up to the current millennium) are generally those born between 1981 and 1996 and are between the ages of 26 and 41. Boomers (born during the baby boom after World War II) were born between 1946 and 1964 and are between 58 and 76 in age. Millennials (the young adult children of boomer parents) are the largest generation in America while boomers are the second largest. There are distinct differences between these two generations that impact their choice of activities, including involvement in church.

- * Millennials take longer to find themselves and reach traditional milestones like marriage, parenthood, and home ownership later than their parents did. Almost 70% of millennials have never been married, though many have cohabiting relationships.
- * Millennials would rather work a job that they love even though it pays less. They will take a lower paying job if it provides flexibility in when, where, and how to work and if it provides greater free time. They also want jobs where they feel like their work is important and matters.
- * Millennials are far more open to changing jobs or working independently, where as boomers remain loyal to a job for decades or even an entire work lifetime.
- * Half of millennials are politically independent.
- * Millennials have lower earnings, fewer assets, and less wealth compared to their parents. Their primary big expenditures are high rent domiciles and paying off student loans, but they will also spend on appliances and electronics, clothes, and live entertainment.
- * Millennials are more health conscious, preferring gluten-free, vegan, and all-natural foods.
- * Millennials prefer to live in big cities rather than suburbs because of population diversity and entertainment opportunities.
- * Three in ten millennials are unaffiliated with any organized religion.

These statistics should make it clear that churches need to find new ways to attract millennials if they want them present in their congregations. Offering events that are entertaining and social while being inexpensive or free will be attractive to this generation. The same is true for activities that will have a positive impact the community. Occasions to gather with other millennials who have common values and life situations (unmarried, no children, etc.) will also provide the kinds of venues to gather that they seek. These kinds of adjustments to church programming do not mean abandoning the types of offerings church currently have and often have had for decades, as these are still very meaningful for boomers. But to attract younger generations requires that we recognize that younger people have different priorities and interests and begin to program with them specifically in mind.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey