

Young Adult Ministry Report

Submitted to the 184th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri and The Right Reverend Deon K. Johnson, Eleventh Bishop of the Diocese of Missouri, November 2023



In June 2023, the Rev. Dcn. Aaron Rogers was hired to serve as the Young Adult Ministry Developer for the Diocese of Missouri. In this role, Rev. Rogers will work to support the flourishing of young adult ministry in the 41 churches of this diocese by connecting young adults and young adult ministry practitioners throughout the diocese, providing though leadership for churches that are developing or seeking to grow young adult ministries, providing tools and resources to the growing number of young adult ministry practitioners in the diocese, and by helping congregations and young adult practitioners locate and acquire resources to support their ministry endeavors for young adults. The hope for this ministry is to create and inspire a vibrant presence of young adults in worship and leadership at all levels of the Diocese of Missouri. The motto of this ministry represents the three areas of engagement in which the Young Adult Ministry will focus: worship, serve, and grow.

To date, the Young Adult Ministry network includes 26 young adults that represent 10 churches in the Diocese of Missouri from both inside and outside the St. Louis Metropolitan area. In September, a Young Adult Advisory Council was created to help steward the vision and the work of the Young Adult Ministry. Those members include:

- William Schoenecker, (St Peter's, Ladue)
- Justin Martin (Christ Church Cathedral, St. Louis)
- Alexia Dukes, (All Saints and Ascension, Northwoods)
- Clive Samson (Faith Church, Ballwin)
- Zach Rugenstone (St. Peter's, Ladue)
- The Rev. Josh Huber (Calvary, Columbia)
- The Rev. Jessica Wachter (St. Alban's, Fulton)
- Andrew Friend (St. Michael, St. George)
- Colleen Haggerty (Holy Communion, University City)

Worship

New Worshipping Communities- To respond to the growing numbers of Young Adults looking for meaningful worship experience in a more informal structure than traditional worship, two distinct worshipping experiences are being developed.

- **Worship @ the Well** is an opportunity for young adults who may be dissociated with churches to craft a worship experience in sacred spaces without the often-restricting pressure of formalized worship services. Worship @ the Well travels throughout the diocese and provides an emergent worship experience for young Adults to gather, worship, and share meals. Its aim is to reintroduce young adults to worship spaces on their own terms and provide a avenue for reconnection to Episcopal Churches.
- **The Happening** (led by Wes Ragland) will be in episodic worshipping experience that is aimed at curating an authentic worship experience for Young Adults over a three-day event. This project is supported by the Young Adult Ministry of the Diocese of Missouri, TryTank at Virginia Theological Seminary, and the national Episcopal Church through a New Communities Grant.

Serve

- **The Young Adult Advisory Council** -The Young Adult Advisory Council has been populated with 9 wonderful young adults in the diocese of Missouri.
- **Representational Leadership**-The Young Adult Advisory Council has committed to supporting and championing young adult representation on diocesan councils and in diocesan ministries. This year the Young Adult Ministry is sponsoring tickets for Young Adults to attend the Friday night dinner at the convention as an effort to encourage participation from young adults.
- **Meetings**- Young Adults have met to discuss how to be more involved in diocesan leadership and to brainstorm what ministry opportunities may be present in the diocese.
- **Young Adult Ministry Resources**- On the Young Adult Ministry page of the Diocesan website, young adult ministry practitioners can find resources to better serve Young Adults in their parishes. Included in the resources are the Young Adult Ministry Trend Reports (a resource of TryTank that informs practitioners on current trends in Young Adult Ministry and provides ideas on how ministry leaders can respond) and list of help resources devoted those who want to start or further develop Young Adult Ministries in their parishes.

Grow

Social gatherings- The Young Adult Ministry has hosted two young adults social gatherings this year. The purpose of the gatherings are to connect and organize young adults and young adult ministry leaders in the Diocese of Missouri. Both gatherings were well-attended and created wonderful space for young adults to share ideas around their religious experience in the diocese. On Nov. 11th, there will be a brunch meeting with Bishop Deon at TURN restaurant. This will be opportunity for young adults to meet Bishop Deon and also directly share their stories and journeys of faith.



Young Adult Book Study: In October, The Rev. Dcn. Aaron Rogers hosted a book study for Young Adults on the book *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating*. The purpose of this book study was not only to inspire a theological orientation toward enhancing and understanding the way young people gather in meaningful ways, but also encourage gatherings around meals and table-sharing wherever young

adults gather.

Sharing Faith Stories of Young Adults-Throughout this year the stories of Young Adults and their faith journeys have been shared on the Young Adult ministry page of the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri websites. Through this medium, we hope to share widely both the hurt and hope that young Adults have for themselves and the future of the Church. This resource allows church leaders to hear directly from Young Adults about their journeys and struggles with faith while also offering a medium for young adults to share their testimonies in powerful ways.

Coming Ahead

In the coming year, I hope to increase and encourage the growth of Young Adult Ministry in the diocese. Members of the diocese can expect to see additional ministry development on the diocesan level as well as on the parish level. Programmatically, I will seek help offer a diocesan Young Adult retreat, create workshops to help develop the capacity of Young Adult Ministry practitioners, nourish the community of young adults through expanded offerings of social gatherings, unite young adults throughout the diocese in ministry and advocacy, increase the number of young adults represented in diocesan leadership, and increase collaboration of Young Adults with the various ministries of the diocese.

Please contact The Rev. Dcn. Aaron Rogers, Ministry Developer to Young Adults, at arogers@diocesemo.org for opportunities to be involved, support, or build Young Adult Ministry in the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri.