


Resources on the church and young adults

compiled by Arlyn Friesen Epp

Like other age groups in the church, young adults offer unique gifts and a particular window into a given cultural time and context. The voices of that generation, like the voices of those older and younger, can give fresh insight for the whole church about what it means to live faithfully as the body of Christ here, now. Below are several resources, all available at CommonWord (www.commonword.ca), that speak to the concerns and issues that young adults are raising on behalf of the wider church community.



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Books and DVDs

The Future of Our Faith: An Intergenerational Conversation on Critical Issues Facing the Church, by Ronald J. Sider and Ben Lowe (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016). Two evangelical leaders forty years apart in age discuss some of the biggest issues challenging Christianity

today and into the future, including marriage, homosexuality, creation care, and politics. The authors model and cultivate an intentional, charitable, and much-needed intergenerational dialogue. Each chapter includes sidebar reflections from notable Christian leaders and study questions for individuals and small groups. See www.commonword.ca/go/1390.

A Living Alternative: Anabaptist Christianity in a Post-Christendom World, edited by Joanna Harader and A. O. Green (New York: Etteloc Publishing, 2014). What does faith look like in a world where Christianity no longer dominates the economy, policy, and morality? Why do mainline Christian structures find this inevitability so intimidating? And how

can the church learn from radical reformers of the past, as we venture into this post-Christendom world? In *A Living Alternative*, these questions and more are put to the test by some of the brightest new voices in the emerging Anabaptist tradition. This book is an exceptional anthology that provides its readers a range of viewpoints using modern Anabaptist lenses. It includes chapter study guides to foster creative new insights for individuals and communities, as we prepare a faith for the future. See www.commonword.ca/go/1391.

Reframing Hope: Vital Ministry in a New Generation, by Carol Howard Merritt (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2010). Much has been written about the changing landscape the church finds itself in, and even more about the church's waning influence in our culture. From her vantage point as an under-forty pastor, Carol Howard Merritt moves away from the hand-wringing toward a discovery of what ministry in, with, and by a new generation might look like. What does the substance of hope look like right now? What does hope look like when it is framed in a new generation? Motivated by these questions, Merritt writes *Reframing Hope* with the understanding that we are not creating from nothing the vital ministry of the next generation. Instead, we are working through what we have, sorting out the best parts, acknowledging and healing from the worst, and reframing it all. Merritt believes that if we can manage to navigate many of these important shifts, the years ahead are full of hope—but only if we recognize and welcome the changes that will come and open ourselves to what new adaptations will bring to us. See www.commonword.ca/go/1392.

Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church, by Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2016). This book profiles innovative churches that are engaging fifteen- to twenty-nine-year-olds and as a result are growing—spiritually, emotionally, missionally, and numerically. Packed with research and practical ideas, *Growing Young* shows pastors and ministry leaders how to position their churches to engage younger generations in a way that breathes vitality, life, and energy into the whole church. See www.commonword.ca/go/1397.

Greenhouses of Hope: Congregations Growing Young Leaders Who Will Change the World, edited by Dori Grinenko Baker (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2010). Do you know a church where young people regularly shape the liturgy with words that speak their truth in ways that also

inspire their elders? Do you hear about congregations that reach out in quirky new ways to their ailing neighbourhoods, instead of locking doors and shipping out to a suburb? Do you find churches creating hospitable space that invites the live wriggling questions and doubts of young people in unhurried, unworried ways? Do you see congregations where young people's gifts are not stored in the basement or bracketed into "contemporary" worship services but are brought forth and celebrated? The authors who collaborated on this book launched a quest for such vibrant, life-giving, greening congregations and observed the diverse practices that grow in these Greenhouses of Hope. In the pages of this book, Dori Baker and six contributors tell the stories of these remarkable congregations, helping others think about how they can create space for the dreams of young people to be grafted into God's dreams for the world. See www.commonword.ca/go/1393.

Embracing Spiritual Awakening: The Dynamics of Experiential Faith, by Diana Butler Bass and Tim Scorer (Denver: Morehouse Education Resources, 2013), DVD. Best-selling author, speaker, scholar, and cultural observer Diana Butler Bass explores what Christianity may look like "beyond religion and beyond the church" in this five-session DVD series on "believing, behaving, and belonging." In this engaging and provocative study, Diana leads a small group of diverse adults, young adults, and youth in a fascinating discussion of how, both culturally and spiritually, we are in the midst of another of history's "great awakenings." See www.commonword.ca/go/1400.

Claiming the Beatitudes: Nine Stories from a New Generation, by Anne Sutherland Howard (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2009). Anne Sutherland Howard asks: What would the Beatitudes look like today? Is it possible to live a Beatitudes life in today's world? Nine remarkable stories of young pastors and seminarians introduce us to a world where the Beatitudes are not an unreachable moral standard but a simple set of guidelines by which we can try to live our lives. Howard reminds us that "these are not impossible hero stories; these are simply people of commitment and conviction and courage who invite us to join them in their daily practice." Each chapter includes discussion questions. See www.commonword.ca/go/1394.

Online resources

“Young Adults and the Future of the Church,” Church Matters Podcast: Episode 110, with guest Jonas Cornelsen (Mennonite Church Canada, 2016), www.commonword.ca/go/1395. Church denominations across Canada are facing an uncertain future. Declining membership, volunteerism, general participation, and donations to support ministry all point to needed change. But what should that change look like, and what is the vision behind it? In this podcast we speak with Jonas Cornelsen, spokesperson for the Emerging Voices Initiative, a group of young adults from across Mennonite Church Canada who want to speak into the process of change at all levels of their church, from congregational to regional to national. Also see Church Matters Podcast: Episode 3, “Young Adults and the Global Church,” with guest Sarah Thompson (2007), at www.commonword.ca/go/1398.

“You Lost Me: The Church and Young Adults,” Face2Face online video, with Kirsten Hamm-Epp, Danielle Morton, Mike Wiebe, Lukas Thiessen, and Harrison Davey (Canadian Mennonite University, 2015). Many young Canadians have stepped away from institutionalized religion, a trend that has been growing for the past twenty-five years. Is the church not listening, or do young adults no longer care? Has the church lost touch with the issues about which young adults are most passionate? How significant is the church’s worship to the participation and involvement of young adults? Do young adults feel any responsibility in keeping the legacy of the church going? What does it mean for the church to be faithful in this time and place? Watch the video to hear several young adult perspectives and convictions related to church and faith, at www.commonword.ca/go/1396.

“Mennonite Youth and Young Adults in Church,” online video by Jessica Reesor Rempel (Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, 2014), www.commonword.ca/go/1483. Youth and young adults in the Mennonite church are regularly talked about but rarely heard from. Here is their wisdom around two questions: What is the best thing about church? What would make church more authentic? Also see Evangelical Fellowship of Canada’s online video “Misplaced: Thoughts by Young Adults on Church,” 2008, at www.commonword.ca/go/1399.

“Moving Out: Engaging Young Adults Contextually,” online video of Deep Faith Conference (Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, 2016), www.commonword.ca/go/1484. In this seminar, Jessica Reesor Rempel and Chris Brnjas, leaders in the young adult initiative PiE (Pastors in Exile) from Kitchener/Waterloo, Ontario, offer guideposts on how to engage young adult faith formation in your local setting. Also see the Pastors in Exile (PiE) blog at <https://pastorsinexile.org/blog/>.

Young Anabaptist Radicals: Let’s Activate Something blog at <https://young.anabaptistradicals.org/>. A loose affiliation of self-identified young Anabaptist radicals write, “We aim to be young in a non-exclusionary way. . . . As radical Anabaptists, we’d like to imagine together what it might mean to root our lived faith today (and tomorrow) in the spirit and soil of early Anabaptism. What does this mean politically? What does this mean socially? What does this mean theologically?”

About the compiler

Arlyn Friesen Epp is director of CommonWord: Bookstore and Resource Centre, a collaboration of Mennonite Church Canada and Canadian Mennonite University.