

Next Generation Ministry

Identifying factors that cultivate calling and confirm calling among millennial leaders

Table introductions

Spend 15 minutes around tables sharing:

- Your **name** & where you serve
- Stories of **coming to ministry** (pathway to ministry, major factors in feeling called)
- Stories of **experience in ministry** (most fulfilling / most challenging aspects)

Focus of project

Intersection of three distinct areas of interest:

1. **Generational** dynamics
2. Biblical concept of **calling**
3. Experience of pastoral **ministry**

Generational Dynamics



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MC2X-LRbkE&t=2s>

Generational Dynamics

Tim Elmore: “The rapid changes in American society over the past century have contributed to the diverse perspectives of the four generational cohorts represented in the workplace today.”

- Responses to **authority** figures
- Responses to **technology**
- Responses to **career**

Generational Dynamics

Millennial characteristics:

Special

Growth & advancement

Sheltered

Leadership & authority

Collaborative

Tech & communication

Connected

Compensation & benefits

Work/Life balance

Scope of project

- Franconia Mennonite Conference of MCUSA
 - Denominational shortage of young leaders
 - FMC a higher percentage of millennial pastors

Percentage of Millennial Leaders By Conference

Central Plains – 13.6%

Illinois – 12.0%

Franconia – 11.3%

Ohio – 10%

Lancaster – 9.1%

Allegheny – 7.8%

New York – 6.9%

Central District – 6.25%

Mountain States – 6.25%

Indiana-Michigan – 5.5%

Eastern District – 5.5%

Atlantic Coast – 2.7%

Gulf States – 0%

North Central – 0%

Scope of project

- Franconia Mennonite Conference of MCUSA
 - Denominational shortage of young leaders
 - FMC a higher percentage of millennial pastors

What has Franconia Mennonite Conference done well and what lessons can be learned for other conferences and denominations?

Approach to project

- Qualitative vs Quantitative
- Composition of Millennial Group (10 total)
 - 27-34 years old
 - 6 males, 4 females
 - 5 in original position, 5 in subsequent position
 - 4 lead or solo pastors, 5 children/youth pastor, and 1 conference leadership

Approach to project

- Qualitative vs Quantitative
- Composition of Millennial Group (10 total)
 - Education: 6 Master of Divinity, 1 currently enrolled in seminary, 3 undergrad degrees
 - Setting: 5 suburban, 2 rural, 2 urban, 1 mixed
 - Congregation size: 4 less than 100 members, 2 between 100-250 members, 4 more than 250 members

Approach to project

- Qualitative vs Quantitative
- Composition of Millennial Group
- Composition of Control Group

Approach to project

- Qualitative vs Quantitative
- Composition of Millennial Group
- Composition of Control Group (10 total)
 - 41-79 years old
 - 6 males, 4 females
 - 1 in original position, 9 in subsequent position
 - 3 lead or solo pastors, 4 associate pastors, 2 conference leadership, 1 retired

Approach to project

- Qualitative vs Quantitative
- Composition of Millennial Group
- Composition of Control Group (10 total)
 - Education: 2 doctorates, 6 Master of Divinity, 2 undergraduate + some seminary
 - Setting: 8 suburban, 2 rural, 1 urban
 - Congregation size: 3 less than 100 members, 3 between 100-250 members, 4 more than 250 members

Approach to project

- Qualitative vs Quantitative
- Composition of Millennial Group
- Composition of Control Group

Cultivating Calling

What leads young people into pastoral ministry?

- Pathway to ministry
- Sensing God's call to ministry
- Hopes & motivations for pursuing ministry
- Expectations regarding ministry
- Growth/change as result of being in ministry

Confirming Calling

What keeps young people in pastoral ministry?

- Experience in ministry
- Contemplating leaving ministry
- Continuing to say “Yes” to ministry
- Challenges/opportunities for the Church today

PATHWAY TO MINISTRY

Common Factors for Millennials and Preceding Generations

Ministry is Broadly Defined

Role of Conference Leaders

Distinctive Generational Factors

Millennials

Lacked sense of ministry growing up

Seminary as place of ongoing discernment

Importance of internships

Preceding Generations

Stronger sense of ministry growing up

Attended seminary as result of discernment

Alternative career paths

DISCERNING GOD'S CALL INWARDLY

Common Factors for Millennials and Preceding Generations

Opportunities to serve

Sense of spiritual peace

Distinctive Generational Factors

Millennials	Preceding Generations
Overseas experiences	
Discerned during times of fasting	
Inward call not as strong as outward calling	Inward call as strong/stronger than outward

DISCERNING GOD'S CALL EXTERNALLY

Common Factors for Millennials and Preceding Generations

Invited to lead in home church (growing up)

Role of faith community (later in life)

Role of pastors, conference leaders, persons at church

Distinctive Generational Factors

Millennials

Preceding Generations

Miraculous encounters with God

Role of spouse

Role of teachers and professors

External call much stronger than inward calling

Inward call as strong/stronger than outward

HOPE AND MOTIVATIONS FOR PURSUING MINISTRY

Common Factors for Millennials and Preceding Generations

(Older pastors did not speak as freely about their initial hopes/motivations for ministry)

Distinctive Generational Factors

Millennials	Preceding Generations
Discipleship	
New ways of experiencing faith/church	
Desire for authenticity	
Justice-related passions	

UNEXPECTED ASPECTS OF PASTORAL MINISTRY

Common Factors for Millennials and Preceding Generations

Amount of administration

Difficulty working with people

Distinctive Generational Factors

Millennials	Preceding Generations
Burden/weight of the role	
Lack of freedom to lead	
	Struggles being perceived as legitimate
	Impact of personal/family life

HOW PASTORS HAVE CHANGED/GROWN AS RESULT OF BEING IN MINISTRY

Common Factors for Millennials and Preceding Generations

Understanding of the pastoral role

Embracing pastoral identity/spiritual gifts

Distinctive Generational Factors

Millennials

Less tied to denominational affiliations

Personal inner work

Approach to role: pastoral care; administration

Preceding Generations

Less tied to local church structures

Managing conflict

EXPERIENCING FULFILLMENT IN MINISTRY

Common Factors for Millennials and Preceding Generations

Stories of transformation

Distinctive Generational Factors

Millennials	Preceding Generations
Connecting people to mission of the church	
Exploring new initiatives/projects	
	Celebrating new people
	Role during holy moments in people's lives

EXPERIENCING CHALLENGE IN MINISTRY

Common Factors for Millennials and Preceding Generations

Relating to people

Distinctive Generational Factors

Millennials	Preceding Generations
Honoring past without being bound by it	
Preaching	
Scope of the role	
Developing new interpersonal relationships	
Sustaining marriage/family relationships	
Conflicting philosophies of ministry	
	Measuring success
	Knowing when to stay/leave a church

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO PASTORS CONTEMPLATING LEAVING MINISTRY

Common Factors for Millennials and Preceding Generations

Personal health/stress

Impact on family (time)

Distinctive Generational Factors

Millennials

Preceding Generations

Impact on family (money)

Questioning concept of professional ministry

When ministry feels boring

Most have not (yet) stepped away

Many have taken time away

How churches function

Ministry beyond congregational setting

CONTINUING TO SAY “YES” TO PASTORAL MINISTRY

Common Factors for Millennials and Preceding Generations

Continue feeling called by Holy Spirit

Seeing impact of their ministry

Distinctive Generational Factors

Millennials	Preceding Generations
Seeing counselor/spiritual director	
Persistent commitment to Christ/church	
	Healthy church systems
	Sustained by relationships
	Value of a larger perspective
	Practical: lack of options; need for income

PERCEIVED CHALLENGES FOR THE CHURCH

Common Factors for Millennials and Preceding Generations

Polarization and division of culture

Church and culture's pursuit of comfort/security/materialism

Distinctive Generational Factors

Millennials	Preceding Generations
Cultural acceptance of multiple identities	
Church's poor reputation	
Defining Anabaptism	
Multi-generational lack of discipleship	
	Adapting to fall of Christendom/modernity
	Disconnected pastors

PERCEIVED OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CHURCH

Common Factors for Millennials and Preceding Generations

Discipleship / following Jesus

Distinctive Generational Factors

Millennials	Preceding Generations
Church's willingness to change	
Rise of ethnic communities	
Fall of Christendom/modernity	
Cultural openness to spirituality	
Missionally-minded ministry	
	Young leaders
	Promoting peace

Cultivating Calling

- Ministry broadly defined
- No sense of ministry growing up
- Seminary as ongoing discernment
- Importance of internships
- Opportunities to serve
- Sense of spiritual peace
- Overseas experiences
- Fasting/dreams/miraculous
- Outer calling primary
- Specific people asking about it
- Desire for discipleship
- New ways of experiencing church
- Desire for authenticity
- Justice-related passions

Confirming Calling

- Stories of transformation
- Connecting to mission of church
- Exploring new projects
- Relating to people
- Weight/burden of role
- Extent of administration
- Marriage/family relationships
- Continue feeling called
- Seeing impact of ministry
- Counselor/spiritual director
- Polarization of culture
- Pursuit of comfort/security
- Multi-generational issues
- Missionally-minded ministry

Reflections

Name 1-2 things in the research you found most interesting/surprising/striking.

Name 1-2 questions you have moving forward.

Name 1-2 suggestions you have for conferences/churches/pastors seeking to call & retain young leaders.

Recommendations

- For **Conference leaders**: pay attention to generational traits
- For **Churches**: develop characteristics of a “calling congregation”
- For **Pastors**: actively and intentionally invite younger persons to consider ministry

Recommendations

- For **Conference leaders**: pay attention to generational traits
 - Special; Sheltered; Collaborative; Connected; Work/Life balance; Growth & Advancement; Leadership & Authority; Technology & Communication; Compensation & Benefits
 - *Assessment of Millennial-Friendly Practices* resource

Recommendations

- For **Churches**: develop characteristics of a “calling congregation”
 - PREPARE the congregation; IDENTIFY those gifted for ministry; TEST those who sense/feel called; AFFIRM those who are called; DETERMINE next steps; ENCOURAGE the youth
 - *Characteristics of a Calling Congregation* resource

Recommendations

- For **Pastors**: actively and intentionally invite younger persons to consider ministry
 - PREACH on calling to ministry; tell your STORY; FORM a “calling team”; stay ALERT to those with gifts; PRAY; MODEL high regard for pastoral calling
 - *Sermon and Worship Scriptures* resource