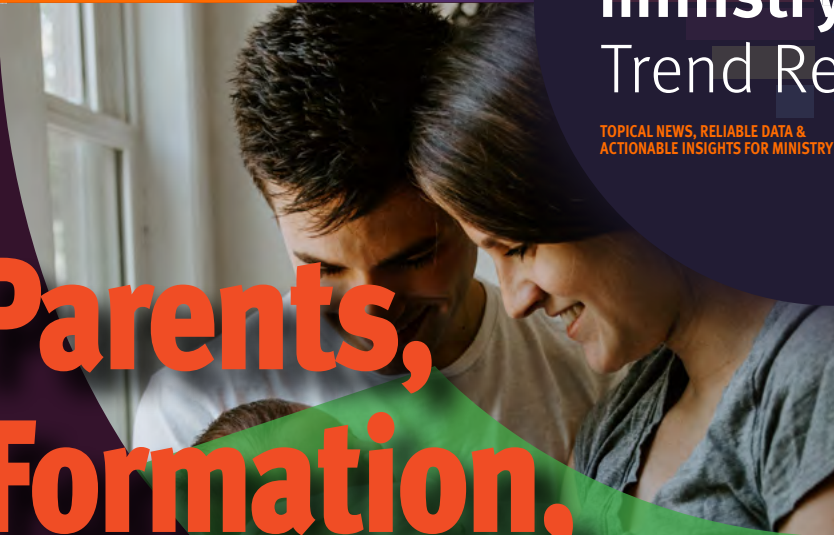




**young  
adult  
ministry**  
Trend Report

TOPICAL NEWS, RELIABLE DATA &  
ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS FOR MINISTRY TODAY

from **TRYTANK**  
Research and Analytics



# Young Parents, Family Formation, and the Church



# Summary Findings



Young parents are raising their kids in ways old and new, relying on the advice of family and friends in addition to a plethora of parenting websites and social media commentators. As in other areas, these young parents want people to be more open and vulnerable about their struggles, especially as they relate to the difficulties these parents face raising children in today's world. Furthermore, these parents are using screen devices (laptops, iPhones, iPads, and more) to entertain their kids and engage app-based educational content.

Young parents are also **having kids later in life** (the median age of first-time mothers [increased to 30](#) in recent years), and **struggling with increasing economic headwinds** (inflation, childcare, mortgage rates and higher housing costs, student debt, and more). Overall, these young parents are resourceful and engaged with the world outside their homes and churches, leading to many opportunities for church leaders to better support and minister along with them.



# Key Questions

- How can the church best minister to young parents and their families?
- How can the church best involve these young parents and their children in the life of the church community?
- What does it look like to minister with young parents and their children in an era when congregational demographics are skewing older and older?





CONTENTS



02

Summary Findings

Key Questions

03

05

WHO WE ARE

Young Adults and Parents

06

07

Young Parents and Parenting Style

08

Demographic Trends among Young Parents and Gen Alpha

09

Gen Alpha and Parenting Styles

10

Momfluencers, Social Media, and Young Parents

Social Media, and Young Parents



12

The Juggling Act of Modern Parenting

13

Young Parents and Financial Literacy

14

Young Parents and Mental Health

Young Parents and Holiday Plans

15

Young Parents and the Church

16

17

Young Parents, the Church, and Childcare

Young Parents and Childcare Outside of Church

18

19

Churches and Co-Working Spaces

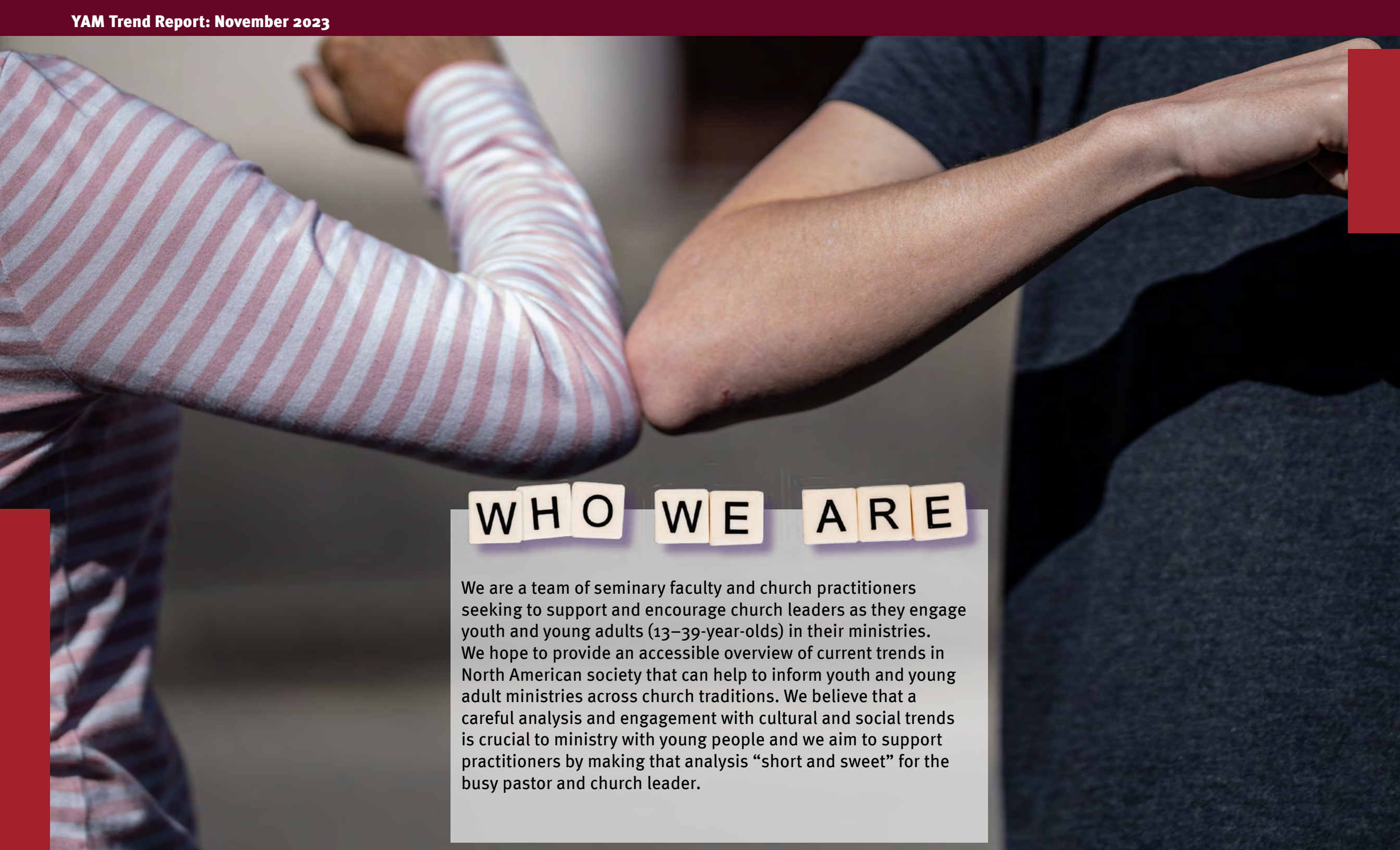
20

Additional Resources

Subscribe

Sign up for a paid subscription and get access to our monthly newsletter, along with our full archive! Each newsletter provides insight into ongoing trends among young people, connecting these trends to helpful resources and ministry ideas for leaders today.



A close-up photograph of two people shaking hands. The person on the left is wearing a long-sleeved shirt with vertical red and white stripes. The person on the right is wearing a dark blue short-sleeved shirt. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The text 'WHO WE ARE' is overlaid on the bottom right of the image.

## WHO WE ARE

We are a team of seminary faculty and church practitioners seeking to support and encourage church leaders as they engage youth and young adults (13–39-year-olds) in their ministries. We hope to provide an accessible overview of current trends in North American society that can help to inform youth and young adult ministries across church traditions. We believe that a careful analysis and engagement with cultural and social trends is crucial to ministry with young people and we aim to support practitioners by making that analysis “short and sweet” for the busy pastor and church leader.





## Young Adults and Parents

As Millennials settle down into their careers and Gen Zers begin their own, more and more are having kids. Indeed, one in three 18-39-year-olds is a parent, while more than half of those with kids have more than one. **Among these young parents, more than three in ten are single parents.**

As with all things Millennial and Gen Z related, younger generations are much more open about the struggles and difficulties they face. In fact, 92% agree that **they appreciate honesty and openness regarding how hard it is to be a parent**, a topic we explored recently in our [Weekly Insights](#). With inflation and the housing crisis, more and more two-parent homes have spouses working full-time [compared to recent years](#). **Young parents especially are feeling the crunch as increasing costs are running up against renewed student debt payments, childcare, and a surge in mortgage rates.**

[All data on this slide comes from YPulse's August 2023 Parenting Behavior Report]



# Young Parents and Parenting Style

Partly in response to these pressures, many young parents are rejecting what they perceive to be the “[helicopter parenting](#)” style of their forebears. The recent [#sittervising](#) trend reflects this pivot, as parents loosely supervise their children while allowing them to play and engage the world independently. Though some might claim positive developmental impacts for their kids as the reason for allowing greater independence early on, **the trend itself is focused on avoiding parental burnout and supporting parents who feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities of childcare, financial management, debt, work, and more.**

[All data on this slide comes from YPulse’s August 2023 Parenting Behavior Report]



# Demographic Trends among Young Parents and Gen Alpha

Gen Alpha comprises children and pre-teens, or those born after 2010. They are predominantly the children of the Millennial generation, though increasing numbers are Gen Z children (Gen Z roughly approximating the 13-25-year-old age range).

As Millennials pioneer non-traditional family and living arrangements, **more than a third of Gen Alpha is being raised in a single parent home.** The increasing cost of... well, everything, has meant that more and more Millennial parents are waiting to have kids later in life (53%) and many are content to have [only one child](#). These trends will have massive demographic impacts down the road, as western European and [U.S. birth rates decline](#).





# Gen Alpha and Parenting Styles

In addition to rejecting “helicopter parenting” in favor of “sittervising,” many young parents are pursuing different ways of interacting with their children. For example, many contemporary parenting styles emphasize communication and empathy between parent and child. **Empathic parenting** focuses on connecting with the emotional experience of one’s child as a way of influencing behavior prior to (and sometimes even without) resorting to any kind of disciplinary process. In line with this approach, harsh disciplinary measures are almost universally proscribed. Embracing a broader perspective that includes empathy as a core goal, “**Gentle Parenting**” is now the popular name for this approach.

In reacting against the “helicopter parenting” of their own upbringing, many of these young parents are even adopting something akin to the “**free range parenting**” style. **In fact, 63% say they “have or will let their child(ren) play unsupervised.”**





# Momfluencers, Social Media, and Young Parents



Many new grandmothers and great grandmothers have remarked about the seemingly bizarre parenting ideas that their children are utilizing with their own kids [this data is purely anecdotal]. These older matriarchs are often right to be alarmed, as recent years have seen an increase in online influencers persuading young parents and moms to purchase questionable products, pursue birthing practices that are not medically sound, and promoting parenting behaviors that are counterproductive and even unhealthy.

The [age of the #Momfluencer](#) is upon us, and these *very-online-moms* are shaping the behaviors and parenting norms that millions of followers take as both normative and exemplary. On the one hand, **these online spaces allow for young or new moms to get an idea of what other moms are thinking about, struggling with, and experiencing in their adjustments to motherhood.** Thus, they can become important spaces for solidarity and mutual support. On the other hand, many of these moms might not realize that **the #Momfluencers they're following are selling products and getting kickbacks for product placement and advertisements.** The profit motive may therefore exert excessive influence over the decision-making of vulnerable and anxious new parents.





# SOCIAL MEDIA, AND YOUNG PARENTS



Momfluencing aside, many young parents appreciate honesty around how hard it is to be a parent, and they like that such vulnerability around shared struggles is becoming a norm. We explored this dynamic in our recent [Weekly Insights](#)—**parenting is hard, and Millennial parents especially want to be able to talk about those hardships frankly** (and sometimes with humor, too!).

Because of this, social media spaces are not excluded merely to the #Momfluencer crowd selling products and parenting knowledge. Many of these spaces simply represent the go-to places for young parents to vent, share their struggles, and seek useful tips from other parents. Since Millennials and Gen Zers are digital natives, they're usually pretty quick to pick up on the profit-seeking influencers and seek out more altruistic outlets. In fact, **more than one in five young parents follow parent bloggers/vloggers (video-bloggers) on social media and nearly four in ten get parenting advice online**. Though this may occasionally bother relatives whose advice goes unheeded (again, purely anecdotal), these spaces are important places for support and connection for young parents.

This doesn't mean that young parents are unwilling to listen to their relatives or elders, however, as **consultation with their partner, family, and friends still ranks as the most popular option when looking for advice. Indeed, consulting close family and friends was twice as popular compared to online outlets for parenting advice** (76% compared to 38%, respectively). It is a both-and for these young parents, and they're happy to keep digging for better advice when they think it may be lacking.





# The Juggling Act of Modern Parenting

An important aspect of the juggling act that many young parents perform on a daily basis is their reliance on familial networks for childcare support. YPulse's recent [Parenting report](#) showed that more than a third of young parents claimed that either they or their own family members provided childcare during weekdays. **Only 16% of young parents stated that they relied on Daycare centers during the week, and 10% on a nanny or babysitter.** Such options are increasingly the preserve of wealthier couples, with more and more juggling single parenthood or two parents who are both working full time. **As the [childcare crisis worsened](#) in recent months with the closure of certain pandemic-related funding streams, these trends are likely to sharpen (more family/informal childcare support, fewer paid programs).**



All data on this slide comes from YPulse's August 2023 Parenting Behavior Report

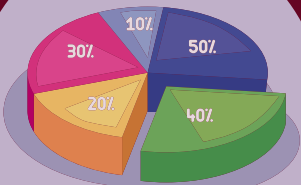




# Young Parents and Financial Literacy



As a result of the financial challenges they face (student debt, childcare, and inflation), many young parents are taking steps to ensure that their children are more financially savvy than they were growing up. In fact, **84% of Millennial parents want their children to learn sound personal finance practices as soon as possible**. These young parents are taking steps to ensure this is the case, too, with many opening savings accounts for their kids while utilizing [neobanks](#) (often digital-only financial technologies) to get them started with financial literacy. Debit cards that have parental controls are [also popular](#) among this generation of young parents.



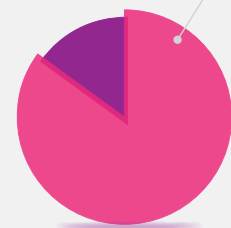
**Many of these young parents think they were not adequately taught about financial responsibility in school or from their families of origin, and they are determined to make sure their own children are not in the same situation.**



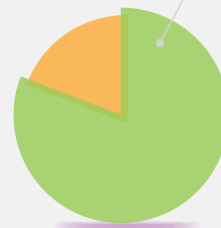


# Young Parents and Mental Health

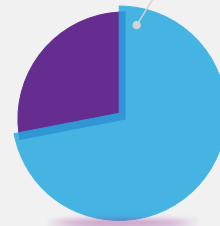
As we explored earlier this month in our [Weekly Insights](#), many young parents are concerned about their own children's mental health. **They believe the world is becoming increasingly unstable (climate change, drastic shifts in global geopolitics, and more), and they're worried about how these instabilities will affect their children both logistically and in terms of their mental health.** With their trademark openness to conversations about mental health and vulnerability, these young parents are raising their children with the same awareness they've established in their own communities and culture. Where Millennials thought they had to fight to create the space for frank mental health conversations, Gen Alpha is growing up in a world where those conversations are not only happening but expected.



**85% OF MILLENNIAL PARENTS AGREE,**  
"I take mental health into consideration within my parenting style"



**81% OF MILLENNIAL PARENTS AGREE,**  
"I'm trying to have open conversations with my child about mental health"



**72% OF MILLENNIAL PARENTS**  
are teaching practical mental health tips to their children





# Young Parents and Holiday Plans

As these young parents gear up for the holiday season, they're making plans with their kids in mind. **They are more likely than non-parents to be traveling to visit family and friends**, and nearly three in ten report that they will be traveling for a vacation during the holidays (compared to only 16% of non-parents).

Young parents and non-parents alike are planning occasions for celebrations with family and friends, though LGBTQ+ young people are the demographic most likely to be celebrating primarily with friends. That said, celebrations with friends (Friendsgivings, gift exchanges, holiday parties and more) are popular across the board with young people—**more than four in ten are planning some sort of celebration with their friends**.





# Young Parents and the Church

Young families and young people in general are, as church consultants are wont to say, the future of the church. How we are able to engage, involve, support, and minister alongside these young families as communities of faith will have important impacts in our individual communities and the church at large.

But how can we support young parents and families? **What are some concrete ways we can make them feel more welcome or supported by our communities?**



# Young Parents, the Church, and Childcare

Churches that can provide social spaces for young parents to engage with others (either with or without their kids having to be around) will continue to have an advantage over churches in which this is not possible. **Furthermore, welcoming young parents and families into the church need not require separate childcare spaces, and many churches maintain areas in the sanctuary for little ones to play and otherwise occupy themselves during worship services.** Creating this kind of shared space may require some tough conversations with congregants—those who are easily distracted or who do not enjoy the sounds children often make during services may need to be seated on the opposite side of the sanctuary. There are creative options here for incorporating children's spaces into the service, and we will leave it to clergy and lay leaders as to how they might best implement such a combined space in their local contexts.



At the same time, paid childcare in the church building, but apart from the sanctuary, is still a solid option. For some parents it's exactly what they're looking for! Churches have an interest in maintaining such a structure for their congregants, even if there are few or no young children who come. **That childcare is an option during the service is, by itself, a way of signaling to young families that their presence and involvement in worship and congregational life is welcome and valued.** Furthermore, it may make single parents feel even more welcome—they can get some adult time on their own in worship and pray without constantly supervising or engaging with their child(ren).





# Young Parents and Childcare Outside of Church

With the childcare crisis continuing to have major economic and social impacts across the country, church communities would be wise to consider if they have the resources to help alleviate some of the pressures on young parents.

**Many young parents who need childcare (often because both parents must work in order to earn enough to live in a stable way or because they are single) are unable to afford it and thus present an important opportunity for the church to get involved in supporting community members.**

While many churches are low on numbers of young families attending, they are also generally high on numbers of retired adults. The church could lean on the social capital and life experience of these retirees to provide creative kinds of childcare for working families. Perhaps it is possible to provide this to young parents for free, or maybe the congregation needs to charge but can get by with significantly reduced rates (compared to local market rates). **Churches might do well to advertise such services beyond their congregational bulletin and to the wider community—young families might be more interested in visiting the church if they think it is attentive to their needs and concerns.**







# Churches and Co-Working Spaces

A recent news [story](#) in ENS (Episcopal News Service) discussed a creative way in which a congregation in Southern Ohio made better use of their building during the workweek while providing a service to the community. With the support of a design company who helped them envision new uses for their building space, the [Church of the Advent](#) in Cincinnati created a **co-working space (rooms and areas can be rented) with onsite childcare**. Their co-working areas include **“a coffee-shop-like communal gathering area on the first floor, and rental offices, desks and private meeting rooms on the second floor.”** The childcare area is located in the renovated basement of the building. With these changes and **an eye toward meeting a common need among working parents in the Covid and post-Covid age (having some childcare coverage while they’re “working from home”), this congregation has sent a message to young, working parents that they are valued and that the church wishes to better support them.** Redesigns and renovation projects like these could be a key step toward ensuring continued engagement and involvement of young people and young families for many years to come.



# Additional Resources for Clergy, Youth Leaders and Parents

- [Practical Tools for Raising Faithful Kids](#) is a 6-session resource that provides a community-building experience for parents and anyone who loves kids. It's designed for small groups or adult education contexts and is a hybrid resource that works online or in-person.
- [Liturgies for Parents](#) is a collection of modern liturgies and accessible breath prayers for parents raising kids in a complicated world.
- [Seasons of Wonder](#) is a year-long weekly devotional for families with reflections, prayers, and activities.
- [Little Way Chapel](#) provides families with tools for faithful, abundant, and intentional living by following the Church Year.
- [Grow Christians](#) is a blog focused on the practical details of life at home with reflections, stories, images, and recipes that inspire the generations to come together as they celebrate the presence of God through the Christian year.