

DISCIPLESHIP | MATTERS

Much has changed since the iPhone was introduced by Steve Jobs. Yet much has changed in the same. I continue to hear periodically, “Nothing used to be scheduled on Sundays or Wednesday nights. These days were reserved for church!” I get it. I mourned the day I realized that it was no longer necessary to look at school calendars while planning events, as activities are now scheduled every night. Rather than complain about current realities, I wonder if the church is not missing an opportunity—one to pursue quality time, creating *kairos* (holy) moments.

I have learned that providing families with a calendar of church activities for the year, along with the planned curriculum content at the beginning of a school year, helps build trust. In the past five years, I have started to think more long-term. To help shape a curriculum template for participants in our youth ministry, I’ve considered where I’d like them to be in their faith formation when they graduate from high school, if they enter youth ministry in the seventh grade. This type of planning communicates to families that we know that their time is valuable and that we know there are many options from which to choose. It demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that time spent in church is time well spent.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35

“Education is a process of love formation.” —David Brooks



Love is holy because it is like grace—the worthiness of its object is never really what matters.

— Marilynne Robinson

Young people in North America don’t need more entertainment. Their options for fun are almost limitless. And yet, recreation seems to be the go-to approach for attracting teenagers to the church—think pizza and games. Such an approach has a greater chance of connecting young people with a moral therapeutic deistic god than with the triune God, who invites us to imagine a better world for ourselves, our neighbors and all of creation.



Thanks to the Rev. Seth M. Vopat, minister for Youth, First Christian Church, Lee’s Summit, Mo., and Research Fellow, Princeton (N.J.) Theological Seminary Log College Project, for developing this bulletin insert.

Few topics stir up more angst among adults than does young people’s “addiction” to technology. Who hasn’t uttered the lament, “They’re always on their phones!”? There is more going on, however, than meets the eye. In her book, “It’s Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens,” tech researcher Danah Boyd explains that young people have turned to social media because opportunities for hanging out that were once common are no longer available. How teens talk about social media reveals an interest not in features of their computers, smartphones or even particular social media sites, but rather an interest in each other. Young people are not addicted to their screens. What young people hunger for is what we all hunger for—connection. Relationship is the main reason young people use technology.



American Baptist Home Mission Societies
Connect. Cultivate. Change.

DISCIPLESHIP | MATTERS is produced monthly by American Baptist Home Mission Societies. Download at no cost at abhms.org > Publications & Resources. For more information, contact Cassandra Carkuff Williams, ABHMS director of Discipleship Ministries, at cwilliams@abhms.org.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.