

GENERATION CONVERSATION

MILLENNIALS

Millennials are a passionate group, dedicated to social justice issues and ready for action and leadership. Millennials seek deep meaning in their lives and are willing to forgo monetary rewards to achieve that meaning. In general, they are pulling away from all churches and church groups.

Birth Years: 1980–Present | Ages: 38 and younger

Representation in The United Methodist Church:

7 percent (or adjusted to 14 percent with children and youth added)

Share of the population: 47 percent

How do they like to be addressed?

Always address Millennials as young adults, never kids. They have worked hard to be where they are today.

What historic events influence them?

Deeply affected by the recession, Millennials see a world of fewer opportunities than their parents or grandparents. Many were only peripherally aware of 9/11 and the aftermath of a war on terrorism and an upsurge in patriotism.

How do Millennials communicate?

They love to be spoken “with” not “at” and find most information through the Internet. They are deeply influenced by new social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat and more. Forty percent of the people in this cohort check their cell phone every 10 minutes. Their texting groups and online peer communities are essential.

They like more casual forms of interaction and seek social bonding and networking with other women. They do not like too many “meetings,” however, when gatherings are required, they enjoy flexible ways of being together, including virtual meeting spaces.

What do Millennials seek?

Millennials greatly value self-expression, authenticity and individuality. Their beliefs lean toward the progressive and they yearn to see results for their actions. They seek spiritual fulfillment and follow Jesus as the original “community organizer” for justice and change. They want to feel valued, not just as helpers but as leaders in their own right. They seek mid-life women as mentors and guides and connectors who can provide a history of social justice context to their work. They seek social justice action opportunities. Sometimes they seek their own spaces to speak their own language and not feel alone in the church. Many of the 30-somethings are now parents of small children and are exhausted, so, in a sense, they are seeking rest.

Ask Each Other

- What is the best way to communicate?
- What were the defining historical events to you?
- What parts of our legacy must we preserve?
- In what ways must innovate and energize?
- How do we respond to the world’s brokenness?
- Where do we find our support?
- How can we exist and welcome women and neighbors who do not feel a sense of belonging?

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GENERATION XERS

This hard-working, organized group was raised in a world where actions resulted in outcomes. Many Gen X women are connected deeply with their families, both their parents and their children. They often prioritize familial needs, making scheduling very tight. They seek to nurture others and grow. Time is precious. This cohort includes soccer moms and primary breadwinners.

Birth Years: 1965–1980 | Ages: 38–53

Representation in The United Methodist Church: 12 percent

Share of the population: 26 percent

How do they like to be addressed?

Consider addressing Gen Xers as “women,” not “ladies.”

What historic events influence them?

Many in this generation attended daycare, afterschool programs and the push for Universal Pre-K. As young adults they saw technology change from typewriters to computers to smartphones. They are tech savvy. Many older Gen Xers have a deep understanding of 9/11 and how that event changed the security of the U.S., at home and around the world.

How do Generation Xers communicate?

Generation Xers have learned to use social media and rely on those sources mostly for news of the day. They participate in online communities but also value in-person engagement. They can run meetings but prefer more casual group interactions outside the workplace.

They want to communicate in ways that do not take inordinate amounts of time. They are results-driven. They can communicate just as easily with Millennials as they do with Baby Boomers—they bridge the gap. Leaders must be realistic about time commitments for this cohort.

What do Generation Xers seek?

They seek balance in life that includes spiritual growth. They need places and ways to feel a sense of accomplishment. Generation Xers seek spiritual and biblical grounding in their work. They seek to find lessons in the stories from the Bible that relate to current-day affairs. They value ingenuity, ideas and innovation. Their beliefs are evenly progressive to conservative. They place the highest priority on working together in order to make a difference. They like seeing measurable outcomes, knowing that their time has been used wisely to help women, children and youth across the globe. Sometimes they need to bond in their own spaces seeking mutuality with other time-constrained, driven women of their generation.

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