Starting a conversation about how we engage young people is often a tricky task. Most of the time, it comes down to the question of “where do we start?”. Much of what we see happening for young people seems to depend on having resources and volunteers – before we know it, we’ve ruled ourselves out and start to believe that we are just “not the sort of church that has young people.” Losing our children as they develop into young adults becomes an accepted part of our narrative. This session gives you a chance to start that conversation over.

In this session, we’ll avoid two main dangers: beating yourselves up over past failures and coming up with ideas beyond the resources of your parish.

Our hope is that this resource will start a new conversation about how we can welcome young people, that empowers the church to take small and feasible steps that will, over time, make a big difference.

Section 1: Empathetic reflection

Aim: To remember what it is like to be a teenager and understand the similarities between the way you felt then and the way young people are feeling now.

Take some time to think and reflect on your own teenage self (the 14-year-old you).

Think about where you slept, what your favourite thing was, the teacher you most remember and more (take a nostalgia trip). Try and answer these questions as you think:

1. What was your greatest hope?
2. What was your greatest fear?
3. What was your greatest need?
4. What was the gift you carried for the world?

You may wish to allow people to give feedback, depending on your group. Out of that conversation, you can conclude by saying that the young people of today’s answers may not vary as much as you think; the fundamental questions are still:

1. “Who am I?”
2. “What kind of community can I belong to?”
3. “Is there more to life than the day-to-day?”
4. “What is my purpose?”

Optional activity: Ask a few people to share an experience from their childhood and why that was important in forming who they are.
Section 2: Exploring possibilities
Aim: To explore some of the simple ways your church could become more welcoming.

For this bit, you’ll need the cut-out cartoons and the grid below, printed or on a projector. The idea is to place each card on the grid as you assess the difficulty and feasibility for yourself and your congregation. By the end, you should have a few ideas in the “zone of pure joy” – where they feel like it could work for you and fits within the resources you have. If you have a larger number of people, split into a few groups so everyone can participate.

![Grid Diagram]

Take the cards and place them randomly on the table, then encourage people to move them along the two axes into locations that reflect what they think of the idea. Ask people as they move them to explain their thinking, including how they imagine the activity looking. This will start to get people thinking more creatively about it.

After about 10 minutes, all the cards should have been moved into their final positions and you’ll have a few in the top right-hand corner. If you don’t have any, don’t panic:

If none are in the top right-hand section, look again at the ones you’ve rejected and ask what it would take to move them. See if there’s any you can tweak and adapt to make them a better fit for yourself or your church.

Once everyone has identified a few cards that could go in the “zone of pure joy”, then you can move onto section 3. If people disagree on something, encourage it to be carried forward for more exploration in the next section.
Section 3: Developing your ideas

Aim: To create a plan for taking actions forward and tracking progress.

Now take the cards you’ve put in the “zone of pure joy” and think about how to action them in your church. Discuss how you might implement them, but within that chat, bear a few things in mind:

1. How will we as the PCC (or small group etc.) take the lead on this – it can't just be something we think other people should do.
2. Have we got too many ideas? Do we need to hold any for later?
3. Who do we need to tell about the things we’re going to try?
4. How will we know we’ve made progress?
5. When will we review our progress?

While you discuss, it’s worth sticking each cartoon you want to develop onto a whiteboard or sheet of paper, so you can write notes and more ideas around it.

From here, you can go wherever you like.

We suggest finishing by praying over the ideas you have gained, but also for the young people that would have come to mind as you talked and schemed together!

What did you think of this session? Say hello at youth@london.anglican.org and let us know how it went, or if you need any support taking your ideas further!