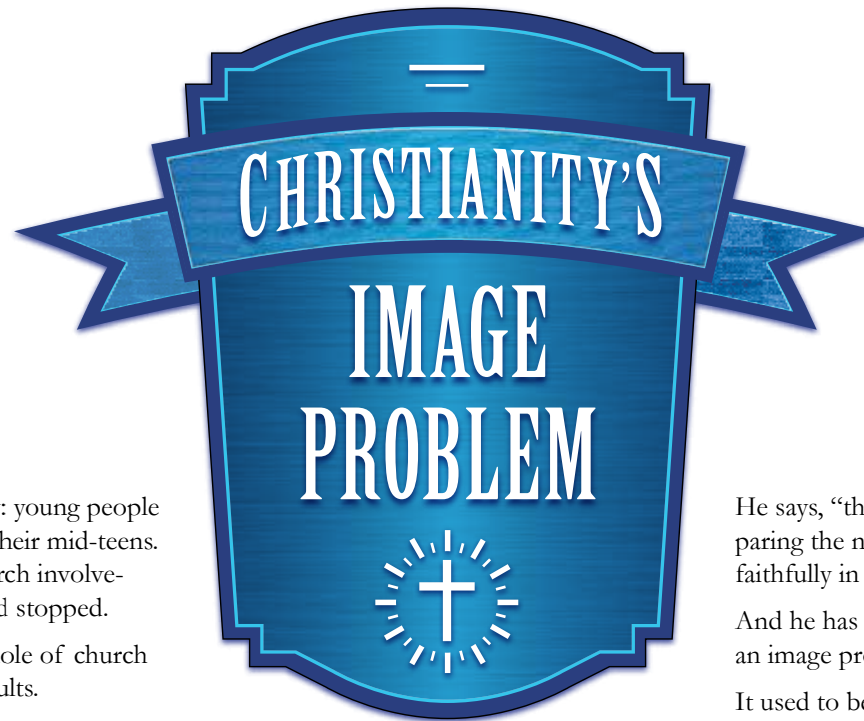




STAR

KNOX-METROPOLITAN UNITED CHURCH

2014 **MAY**



It's a common faith journey: young people are religiously active until their mid-teens. But in a few years, the church involvement of most has faltered and stopped.

Some people call it a “black hole of church attendance” among young adults.

David Kinnaman certainly calls it a black hole. His company, the Barna Group, did several studies and thousands of interviews with people who are on the outside of Christianity, as well as talking to hundreds of pastors and church leaders. The results of his research are in the book *Unchristian: what a new generation really thinks about Christianity . . . and why it matters*.

**The major roadblock
to building an
intergenerational
church**

He says, “the church is not adequately preparing the next generation to follow Christ faithfully in a rapidly changing culture.”

And he has concluded that Christianity has an image problem.

It used to be that the Christian Church was perceived as one of the good things in society — even among people who weren't churchgoers. Those days are fading. The Church is now seen as *a societal problem* by a growing number of young people.

See **Image problem** on next page

Image problem — continued from front page

The three most common perceptions of present-day Christianity by young outsiders are:

- **Antigay (91%);**
- **Judgmental (87%);**
- **Hypocritical (85%).**

Other negative opinions include: old-fashioned, too involved in politics, out of touch with reality, insensitive to others, boring, intolerant of other faiths, and confusing.

Whereas these “outsiders” make up about 25% of those born before 1965, it increases to 33% of 30- to 50-year-olds and 40% of those 30 and younger. In short, the younger the eyes, the worse we look.

“Christianity has become a nice Sunday drive. Where is the living God, the Holy Spirit, an amazing Jesus, the love, the compassion, the holiness?”

— *One young believer’s frustration with contemporary Christianity*

No longer a churched culture

A 2004 Gallup poll reported that 20% of Canadians attended church weekly, less than half that of their American counterparts. Some church leaders consider that America — and we can certainly add Canada — is no longer a “churched” culture in which much of life revolves around the church. Fewer people are being baptized, married, and buried by a church.

And church dropouts aren’t coming back to a church that they see is “hypocritical, judgmental, too political, and out of touch with reality.”

What Christianity looks like from the outside

So when a generation doesn’t go to church, it also raises children who don’t know about Christianity. They’re curious. And when they ask questions, they think of themselves as colleagues in the search for truth, not as students waiting to be told “the way it is”.



There are four age groups in today’s congregations: Builders, Boomers, Busters, and Bridgers.

- **The Builders.** Born before 1945. Builders are the “get-it-done” generation. They tend to be faithful, loyal, and committed. They remember the Depression, World War II, and days with no TV.
- **The Boomers.** Born between 1945 – 1965. Boomers grew up in a strong economy. They remember the Vietnam War and can’t imagine life without TV.
- **The Busters.** Born between 1965 – 1983, they were raised during a fluctuating economy and remember Operation Desert Storm and MTV.
- **The Bridgers.** Born after 1983. They have known only a volatile economy and the war against the Taliban. They can’t imagine life without the Internet and cell phones.

So they want a dialogue, not a sermon, according to Kinnaman: “[Bridgers] and Busters are the ultimate ‘conversation generations’ . . . Young outsiders want to have discussions, but they perceive Christians as unwilling to engage in genuine dialogue. [Outsiders believe Christians] think of conversations as ‘persuasion’ sessions, in which the Christian downloads as many arguments as possible.”

One thing hindering the adoption of Christianity among the young is its historical position of influence. As Kinnaman writes, “It is not a good time to be the favored team. It’s in vogue to be different, under the radar, and independent. Christianity feels like none of these things.”

Give people better reasons to hate us

No one is saying we need to water down Jesus’ teachings. He said that the world would hate his followers. But they need to hate us for the right reasons. They need to hate us because we are a shining light and not just another kind of darkness.

There are things Knox-Met can do to disrupt the negative perceptions:

- **Take the steps to become a gay-affirming congregation.** Young people expect Christians to dislike lesbian, gay, transgendered, and bisexual individuals. For many young people, sexual orientation isn’t even an issue anymore. If there was ever a marker that divides the generations, this is it.
- **Dialogue, don’t sermonize.** Getting the whole story about an issue makes us quick to listen and slow to speak.
- **Don’t confuse talking with action.** Continue to work for social justice issues — and be widely *seen* to be working for social justice issues. False modesty hides our light under a bushel and inspires no one.

Taking these steps will not only attract unchristians, but also those young adults who have given up on church. Kinnaman quotes one 35-year-old believer: “Christians have become political, judgmental, intolerant, weak, religious, angry, and without balance. Christianity has become a nice Sunday drive. Where is the living God, the Holy Spirit, an amazing Jesus, the love, the compassion, the holiness? This type of life, how I yearn for that.”

This is part two of a series about becoming an intergenerational congregation. Part one appeared in the February 2014 issue of Star.

Passages



Carole Bryant visits a traditional Malawian dwelling. The hut is round to symbolize equality, togetherness, the leadership of God, and trust for each other.

Back from Malawi.

In late February Carole Bryant made a two-week trip to Malawi. Rated as one of the world’s least developed nations, this southern African country depends on aid to meet its development needs. Since 2008 Carole has made five visits to the Polytechnic at the University of Malawi to enhance its governance and strategic planning, as well as teaching three graduate classes. Her efforts

were part of a larger Canadian International Development Agency-funded project that included advancement in the areas of policy and planning, management development, curriculum development, research, and distance education.

Future 40. The winners of CBC Saskatchewan’s search for a “new generation of leaders, builders and change-makers under the age of

40” were announced in late March. Several of those named were from Regina, and we took the opportunity to congratulate them for their work: David Straub, Flip Eatery & Drink; Marty Seymour, Agribition; Nicole Sarauer, Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan; Trent Wotherspoon, NDP; Courtney Keith, MacPherson Leslie & Tyerman; Jenn Bergen, Queen City Hub; Tim Johnson, Canadian Red

Cross; Adam Ward, the Giftstone Project, Sacred Heart Community School; and Chelsea O’Connell, Saskatchewan Fashion Week.



In her legal work, Nicole Sarauer told us that she has a connection with the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry which works out of Knox-Met.

Retreat aims to refresh, energize Knox-Met



Spark, a retreat for the entire Knox-Metropolitan United Church family, is planned to both refresh the individuals within it and energize the community of faith.

“We recognize that we are on the threshold of new beginnings, and this spiritual retreat is intended to encourage and strengthen us,” according to Colette Forbes, committee member.

As a result, the event will not include business meetings, organizational decisions, or committee recruitment.

Instead, it will feature Lorne Calvert as inspirational speaker, children and youth activities, music, food, and fellowship, but most

importantly, some time to have fun, grow spiritually, and build community.

“We’re naming the retreat ‘Spark’”, says Mavis Peters, also on the retreat committee. “We liked it because it was flexible and implied a small beginning to a great change.”

The event is booked for Friday and Saturday, September 26 – 27 — Friday evening in the Lower Hall at Knox-Met. Saturday will see participants meeting for the day at Lumsden Beach Camp.

If this time of spiritual growth with an enigmatic title sparks your own ideas and questions, contact members of the retreat committee: Norm Brown, Colette Forbes, Jean Parker, Mavis Peters, and Gary Seib.

May



4 Amici Singers Concert
Blue Skies features desserts from Koko Patisserie. 2 p.m. Lower Hall ■ Tickets start at \$10. Contact Hart Godden.



10 Palestine: Seeking a New Perspective With Rev. Marianna Harris. Chili supper 6 p.m., presentation 7 p.m. Child care available ■ Contact Laura 306-543-2626.

25 Rosa Mirijello-Haynes Piano Recital 1 p.m. Sanctuary

June

7 Jodie Soulodre Piano Recital 1:30 p.m. Sanctuary

14 Jenn Crawford Piano Recital 7:00 p.m. Sanctuary



15 South Saskatchewan Youth Orchestra Concert Time TBA, Sanctuary ■ Information: www.ssy0.ca