



*Congregations have...*

**ENGAGED  
PARENTS**

*Congregations have...*

# ENGAGED PARENTS

Parents have always been gifted with the role of primary instructor and example for their children in the Christian faith. In Youth Ministry's research, nearly 3-in-4 Millennials listed a parent as one of the most influential persons in their faith lives. This statistic can bring both joy and concern. A faithful parent desires to be a strong positive influence on their children as they grow in relationship with Jesus and His truth. Yet not every family looks the same, nor does every family have two faithful Christian parents. Congregations can do much to support parents and to engage families in whatever form they take. As John says, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth" (3 John 1:4).

Today's busy lives mean families are constantly forced to make difficult decisions to prioritize their schedule and resources. Christian faith and practices can still be at the center of family life. An engaged parent can prioritize regular worship, prayer, Scripture reading and devotions. Congregational ministry can consider busy schedules and provide resources to support families wherever they are. As children grow, parents can challenge them to become more independent in choosing their own priorities, while still encouraging and coaching them to keep Jesus at the center. By setting faithful priorities, children learn to set similar priorities during life's transitions and daily life.

Engaged parents invest in the lives of their children. Youth Ministry research found today's active LCMS young adults were the most likely to report having a good relationship with parents in high school. Most of these active LCMS young adults felt they could talk to both parents about life issues and could share openly with at least one parent about their faith. When difficult issues arise, children are more likely to stay in the church if parents are trusted, available, and empathetic.

Families should actively and regularly engage in faith conversations at home as well as simply being open and ready for conversations as they naturally occur. Engaged parents care how their children are living out their faith as family members, students, teammates and beyond. They seek to keep a pulse on culture and its impact on their children.

Youth Ministry's research found today's active LCMS young adults likely saw a high level of faith practiced by their parents. This includes frequent Bible reading at home, praying as a family, regular worship attendance of both parents together (continuing even today), and at least one parent having a service or leadership role in the congregation. Engaged parents are active in worship, personal spiritual development and service to others. They model faithful behaviors in their lives. They encourage acts of repentance and forgiveness to spouses, peers, and their children. Youth will struggle to emulate faith behavior they don't see. Whether parent, guardian, grandparent or other family structure, youth will tend to emulate worship and congregational involvement of the adults in their lives.

The role of the congregation is to practice empowering all parents to actively engage in their children's faith lives. Regardless of family dynamic or make up, congregations can help provide a dynamic support system to adults raising children. Congregations can deliberately help parents make meaningful connections with mentors and peers. Older mentors have experienced the trials and celebrated the joys of parenting. Christian peers can walk through life together and encourage one another in shared experience. Congregations can also help make service and leadership opportunities accessible to parents through childcare or utilizing technology. While this may be more complicated, parents serve as a critical example to their

children of what it means to live out faith. Foremost, congregations can continually point to parents as the primary teachers of faith, supporting and equipping them in this role. ■

## Millennials

When LCMS Research and LCMS Youth Ministry began their research, Millennials were defined as young adults born between 1983-1999. Pew Research Center now uses 1996 as the last birth year for Millennials, and Barna uses 1998. (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>).