

YOUTH MINISTRY FUTURES RESEARCH

# YOUTH MINISTRY FUTURES RESEARCH REPORT

A SNAPSHOT OF YOUTH MINISTRY HEALTH  
IN THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF MELBOURNE.





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# Introduction





**Youth Ministry Futures research report** *presents a snapshot of youth ministry in the parishes of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne. This revised report contains newly released data on the numbers of volunteers and employed staff with youth ministry responsibilities in parishes and is supplemented by the 2024 Children's Ministry Futures Research Report.*

*Together the two projects offer a clear understanding of the health of our children's and youth ministries, and a sense of the opportunities and challenges that are before us. We hope the findings will help the various institutions of the Diocese to better support the health and growth of ministries among children and young people into the future.*

From April to July 2021, invitations were extended to all vicars in the Diocese to participate in a 45-minute video call responding to questions about key indicators that determine a healthy and fruitful long-term youth ministry. While we could have interviewed youth ministry leaders for this project, we chose to interview vicars in order to better understand how youth ministry is integrated into the life of the whole parish.

Following initial contact by email or telephone, our team interviewed 186 parish leaders (predominantly the vicar or priest-in-charge)<sup>1</sup>, representing 87% of the 213 parishes of the Diocese.

Half of the vicars we reached (n=93) chose to complete only a short form of the survey. The short survey gathered information about the number of young people involved in the parish and whether or not the parish had an active youth ministry. These vicars shared general comments about youth ministry in the parish, and were asked the concluding question, 'What would you like to see for youth ministry across the Diocese of Melbourne?'

The remaining vicars (n=93) answered the full survey. This asked them to rate the health of the ministry among young people in their parish over the past three years, and their hopes for that ministry over the coming three years. The interviewers then asked vicars to rate their parish's involvement with young people in relation to four indicators of youth ministry health:

*Health indicator 1: Young people are integrated into the life of the whole church*

*Health indicator 2: Young people are disciplined into mature and lasting Christian faith*

*Health indicator 3: Youth leaders and adult mentors are equipped for their roles*

*Health indicator 4: The church has an outward vision for reaching young people*

Open-ended follow up questions were asked in response to each of the ratings given. Open-ended questions were also asked about the training for youth ministry that the parish had found useful in the past, and the training needs in the present. Vicars gave information about the number of staff and volunteers involved in youth ministry in the parish, and the activities offered for young people. As with the short survey, the extended survey concluded by asking vicars what they would like to see for youth

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<sup>1</sup> This number includes 8 locums, 2 associate ministers, 2 youth pastors, and 5 other lay leaders. Four interviews were conducted with the vicar and their youth leader, associate minister, or children's and family minister. For convenience all interview respondents are referred to in this report as 'vicars'.

ministry across the Diocese of Melbourne.

## Research Team

The project was led by the Director of the Ridley Centre for Children's and Youth Ministry, Graham Stanton, in partnership with the Diocesan Youth Ministry Consultant, Brian Holden. We are indebted to professional expertise from external research consultant Dr Duncan Rintoul, Director of Rooftop Social. Data collection was led by research assistants Lauren Moore and Louisa Pfitzner, assisted by voluntary contributions from a team of Diocesan youth ministers: Tom French (Merri Creek, Inner North Youth Group), Joshua Millard (St. Thomas' Burwood), Jimmy Young (Cranbourne), Lars Vorlicek (St. Hilary's Kew). Brian Holden, Louisa Pfitzner, and the team of youth ministers also contributed to the analysis and reporting of the data.

The project was funded by the generous donation of one of Ridley's financial supporters.

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## Commendations

*Young people are a vital part of the life and mission of the Diocese. This research gives us a valuable window on the challenges and opportunities before us. I hope this work will be widely read and spark a renewed conversation about how we can best make the word of God fully known among the young people of the Diocese.*

### **The Most Reverend Dr Philip Freier, Archbishop of Melbourne**

*This report is a reminder of how important a healthy youth ministry is for the life and future of the church. Effective youth ministry calls for renewed commitment in each generation. The report highlights the need to recruit and train new leaders for fruitful ministry among young people, identifies opportunities and needs for creative partnerships, and challenges us to greater investment in youth ministry in the future. Ridley College, through the work of the Centre for Children's and Youth Ministry, is committed to playing our part in promoting the health of youth ministry in the Diocese. This report is an invaluable contribution to that task.*

### **The Reverend Dr Brian Rosner, Principal, Ridley College**

*This excellent piece of work is a call to action for all vicars across the Diocese of Melbourne. It demonstrates what we long suspected, that we cannot wait to start thinking about youth ministry when the mythical family of teenagers and all their friends suddenly descend on a parish. Our worship needs to connect and be understood as authentic to young folk – they deeply desire to feel connected and valued as part of the Body of Christ. I commend this report to you, and I urge you not to wait, for the Kingdom of God cannot wait. If you feel under equipped, get trained, find resources, ask for help, and encourage the Diocese to provide some of that support. I confess that I am one of those vicars who grieve the absence of youth in their parish for almost a generation, so I will be taking my own advice!*

### **The Reverend Dr Elizabeth Breakey, Vicar, Bellarine Gateway Parish**



Part 1:  
Key Findings and  
Recommendations



# Have we reached our goal?

In the Diocesan vision document, 'Our Journey: Vision and Directions 2017-2025', Strategy 2.5 states the desired outcome, that by 2022 'appropriate models of youth ministry are evident in at least 50% of parishes'. So, have we reached our goal?

**The short answer is 'No'.**

In this survey:

- 61 of the parishes we interviewed (29% of all the parishes in the Diocese) had a youth group.
- Of course, youth group is not the only way to do youth ministry; a further 22 parishes had other ministries to connect with the young people in their parish. These included involving young people as active participants in church services, partnerships with other parishes, warm intergenerational relationships, mentoring, and occasional ministries of confirmation and monthly youth services.
- A further five parishes did not have a youth group at the time of the survey, but had plans to begin something in the near future.

Overall then, there are 88 parishes (41%) that either have, or are likely to soon have, some form of ministry with young people. This leaves 56 with no young people, 42 with small numbers of young people but no organised youth ministry, and 27 (13%) who did not respond to this survey.

However, among the 88 parishes with some form of youth ministry:

- 8 of them gave themselves a health rating of 4 out of 10 or lower
- Another 7 had health ratings of 5 or higher, but gave themselves a hope rating of 4 or lower
- Another 7 had health and hope ratings of 5 or higher, but rated their plans for discipleship of young people at 4 or lower
- Another 4 had health, hope, and discipleship of 5 or higher, but rated their outward vision at 4 or lower.

Can a youth ministry that is unhealthy, with little hope, little focus on discipleship, and little outreach be an 'appropriate model' for that parish?

On these revised figures, **an appropriate model of youth ministry is evident in 62 parishes (29% of the total)**. To reach the Diocesan vision of 50% by 2022, we would need to increase this coverage by 45 parishes.

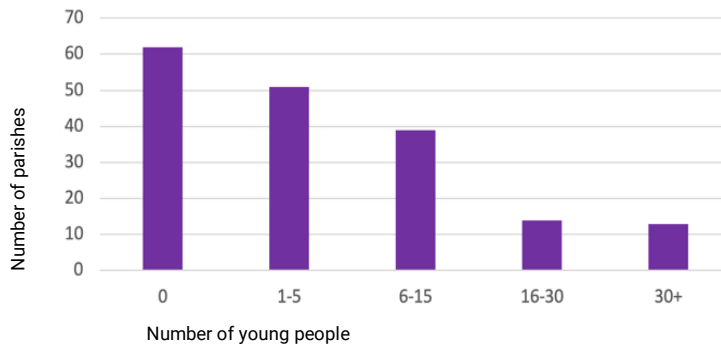
## Are we satisfied with 8 young people each?

Even if we were able to initiate 45 new parish youth ministries before the end of 2022, would that really mean we have met our youth ministry targets? What constitutes an 'appropriate model' of youth ministry anyway?

Excluding the 66 parishes with no teenagers, and the 13 parishes that have groups of more than 30, the remaining 104 parishes have 8 young people each. This is hardly enough to sustain the institution, let

alone fulfil the call of God's mission in our time and place.

We have somewhere between 1,367 and 1,641 young people involved in the parishes of the Diocese.<sup>2</sup> At the 2016 Census there were 578,000 teenagers in Greater Melbourne, Hume, and Geelong. Some 35,335



of those 10-19 year olds were registered as Anglicans. ***The Anglican Diocese of Melbourne connects with no more than 0.2% of the overall youth population, and less than 5% of the Anglican teenagers in our city.***

## Room to grow

Clearly the youth ministries of the Diocese have a vast mission field on our doorstep. We are far from being at the point of exhausting the opportunities to make the word of God fully known among the teenagers who live within the borders of the Diocese.

Existing ministries among young people have room to grow. Under-developed youth ministries are waiting for resources. Pockets of enthusiasm and commitment to innovation in youth ministry need to be connected and enabled to try new things.

This research has uncovered encouraging signs of life in the youth ministries of the Diocese. All this is testimony to the Lord Jesus' enduring commitment to his promise to build his church.

At the same time, this research has revealed the urgency of the task and the challenges to be met. Our hope and prayer is that this work will help to focus our attention and direct our plans.

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<sup>2</sup> The reason for citing a range here is that vicars often gave a range of numbers ('we have 10-12 young people'), or indicated a larger number of young people 'on the roll' with a smaller number present in activities in any one week.

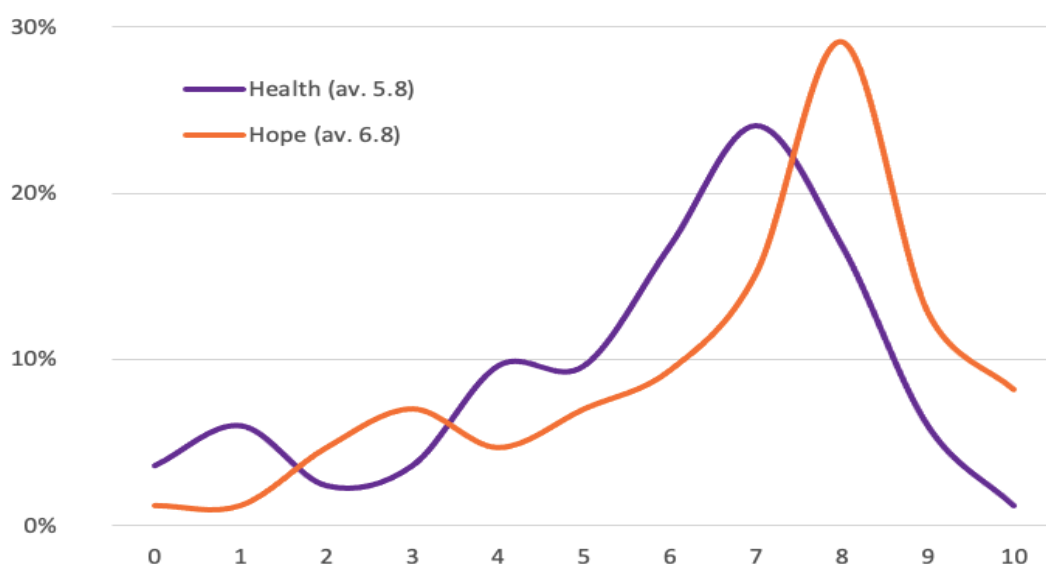


# What is a healthy youth ministry?

Young people are not a resource to secure the future of an institution. They are not the church of the future, they are the church of the present: received and welcomed at baptism as members with us of the body of Christ, children of the one heavenly Father, and inheritors of the kingdom of God.<sup>3</sup> At confirmation we pray that they would be empowered and sustained for God's service.<sup>4</sup>

A healthy youth ministry is one that welcomes young people as full members of the body of Christ so that they may take their part in the building up of his church. Not content to entertain young people, and aiming for more than getting them to turn up, a healthy youth ministry strives to see young people established and strengthened as disciples of Jesus. In order to serve their needs and release their energy, a healthy youth ministry connects young people to gifted and qualified leaders who accompany them in their journey of faith. And as we join with young people in God's mission in the world, a healthy youth ministry looks outward to the young people outside and beyond the church.

## More hopeful than healthy



Vicars were asked to rate the **health** of their youth ministry, and their level of **hope** about the future of youth ministry, on a scale from 0 to 10. On average, vicars were more positive about their **hope** for youth ministry in the parish over the coming three years than they were about the **health** of their youth ministry over the previous three years. The average overall rating for **hope** was 6.8, compared to an average overall rating of 5.8 for **health**.

Based on vicars' ratings, 12% of parishes describe themselves as very unhealthy (0-2), 23% are unhealthy (3-5), 41% are moderately healthy (6-7), and 24% are very healthy (8-10).

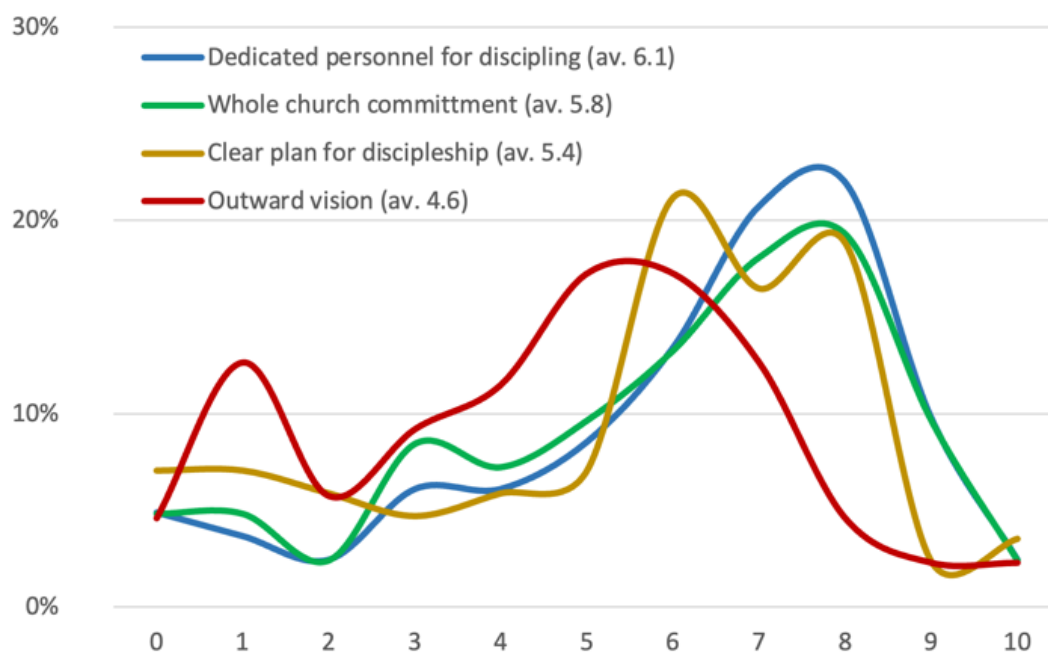
One in four of vicars (26%) have little or very little hope for the future (0-5), 24% are moderately hopeful (6-7), and 50% are very hopeful.

<sup>3</sup> A Prayer Book for Australia, 'Holy Baptism in Holy Communion', (Mulgrave, VIC: Broughton, 1995), 60.

<sup>4</sup> A Prayer Book for Australia, 'Confirmation', (Mulgrave, VIC: Broughton, 1995), 90.

Two in three vicars (68%) rated their hope for youth ministry to be 2 or more points higher than the current health of their youth ministry. One in nine vicars (11%) gave the same or similar (+/-1) rating for both health and hope. This leaves 21% of vicars who rated their hope for the future 2 or more points below the rating they gave for health.

## Health Indicators



Vicars rated their churches most highly on health indicator 3: having **dedicated personnel** for discipling young people (average rating of 6.1). Indicator 1, having a **whole church commitment** to young people, was second highest at an average of 5.8. Indicator 2, having a **clear plan for discipleship** of young people was third at an average rating of 5.4. For each of these three indicators, the majority of vicars rated themselves around 6, 7 or 8.

The lowest rating was given to indicator 4, having an **outward vision** for reaching young people (average 4.6). Outward vision stands out from the other three indicators as having the most frequent responses clustered around 5 and 6, with a second peak at 1.



# Recommendations

As part of a broad commitment to the health of youth ministry across our Diocese, we recommend the following actions:

## 1. Expand the Diocese-wide interaction with the four key indicators of youth ministry health

The research team for this project was enormously encouraged by the willingness of vicars to engage in a conversation about the health of the ministry among young people in their parish. Even when there were no teenagers currently involved, it was heartening to see the willingness of so many vicars to consider the challenges and opportunities we face.

It would be valuable to use the momentum from this research to broaden and deepen engagement with the four key indicators of youth ministry health in the parishes, deaneries, and regions of the Diocese.

***We recommend that individual parishes use these indicators to shape aspects of their mission action plans, that deaneries discuss how they could work together to improve health on each indicator, and that regional bishops identify the resources needed to improve health on each indicator across their region.***

## 2. Invest in an expanded Diocesan office for children's and youth ministry

While the primary action of discipleship of young people must occur within the parishes and congregations of the Diocese, many of the challenges and opportunities identified in this research would be well met by an expanded Diocesan office for children's and youth ministry.

The valuable contribution to supporting and strengthening parish youth ministry by the Diocesan Youth Ministry Consultant has been noted a number of times through this report. There is potential to expand the positive outcomes we have already seen by committing to continuing expanding the resources available.

While this research has focussed on ministry among teenagers, it is apparent that healthy youth ministry must operate in tandem with healthy ministry among children and families. While these areas of ministry speciality have certain distinctions in strategy, practice and workforce, there are many areas of overlap and connection. A combined office for children's and youth ministry is needed to rebuild Diocesan support for children's ministry and would facilitate a more intentional and effective integration of these two vital areas of ministry.

***We recommend that the Diocese fully fund an office for children's and youth ministry that would effectively plan for, resource and support growth in the number of children and young people involved as active disciples in the parishes of the Diocese.***

### 3. Engage with existing opportunities for youth ministry training and discipleship

Many vicars have expressed a desire for specific kinds of training opportunities and opportunities for combined events for young people. Many of these resources are already available including:

- The **Ridley Certificate** units *Introduction to Youth Ministry* and *Introduction to Children's Ministry*: two short online video courses providing a basic introduction to the what, why, who, and how of ministry with teenagers and children. <https://certificate.ridley.edu.au>
- Anglican Diocese of Melbourne **Launch** leadership internship: a year-long cohort-based training program for youth ministry leaders exploring or establishing leadership roles
- Training pathways in the undergraduate and graduate programs at **Ridley College** providing vocational training for children's and youth ministry leaders. <https://www.ridley.edu.au/formation/centres-of-excellence/centre-childrens-youth-ministry/>
- Church Missionary Society, *Summer Under the Son* **SUTS Youth Camp**: an annual youth camp for young people in years 7 to 12. <https://www.cms.org.au/vic/youth22/>.

***We recommend that parishes make full use of the opportunities for youth ministry training and discipleship that already exist within the Diocese.***

## 4. Develop new youth ministry resources for small churches and parishes of all traditions

The research identified two significant gaps in resourcing and training for youth ministry. One is in the training and resources available for small churches that want to start a youth ministry from scratch or with very limited resources. The other is training and resources available for youth ministry in middle-church, Anglo-Catholic, and liberal-Catholic traditions.

There is also a lack of combined activities or gatherings for young people from non-evangelical traditions.

***We recommend that the youth ministry training and resourcing institutions of the Diocese, including the Diocesan Youth Ministry Consultant, Ridley College, and Trinity College Theological School, develop appropriate resources to support discipleship of young people in small churches and non-evangelical parishes.***

## 5. Devise strategies to recruit and sustain long-term vocational youth ministry leadership

The research confirms the importance of effective leadership for the health and growth of youth ministry. When leaders are available and effective, youth ministry flourishes; when they are ineffective or lacking, youth ministry struggles. Yet even when there are financial resources and ministry vision to employ people for youth ministry, appropriate leaders are very hard to find.

Alongside new and existing training opportunities for youth ministries, we need a strategy to recruit, deploy, and sustain youth ministry leaders to meet current and future needs.

The frequent turnover in the main leader of a youth ministry has a particularly negative impact. More research is needed to identify why people leave youth ministry leadership, and what is needed to encourage them to remain. To what extent is this high turnover the result of youth ministry leadership being given to curates who will be short-term by design? Are youth leaders being appointed with insufficient training to sustain them for the long-term? Are youth ministers not being adequately supported for long-term ministry?

***We recommend that a strategy be developed to effectively recruit, train, support, and sustain a long-term pipeline of vocational leaders for youth ministry.***



## 6a. Commit to future research in children and families ministry

Although this research project is about *youth* ministry, Vicars often spoke about the importance of having clear and effective connections with ministry among *children and families*.

The target for ministry among children and families in the Diocesan vision document, 'Our Journey: Vision and Directions 2017-2025' is far more ambitious than the goal for ministry among teenagers. Strategy 2.4 states the desired outcome, that by 2022 'children and families ministry has been fully embraced as a key area of ministry in all parishes'. If we are to continue pursuing this ambition we need an understanding of where we are, the obstacles that remain, and the opportunities for moving forward.

***We recommend that a similar research study to this one be undertaken to explore the health and needs relating to ministry among children and families in the parishes of the Diocese.***

## 6b. Commit to future research in youth ministry

The value of this research depends on the extent to which we, God's people in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, in the parishes, institutions, and structures of the Diocese, take up the recommendations given here.

***We recommend that a follow-up research study be undertaken within three to five years to assess the progress made toward healthier and more effective ministries among young people.***

A top-down view of a person's hands writing in a lined notebook. The right hand holds an orange pen, and the left hand rests on the page. The person has white nail polish and a blue and white patterned ring on their right ring finger. A silver smartphone is visible in the top left, and a laptop keyboard with 'option' and 'command' keys is in the bottom left. The background is a light-colored wooden desk.

## Part 2: Detailed Findings

# Health

## We asked vicars:

*Thinking broadly about the youth ministry in your parish over the past 3 years (so including during the COVID pandemic and the two years prior to the pandemic):*

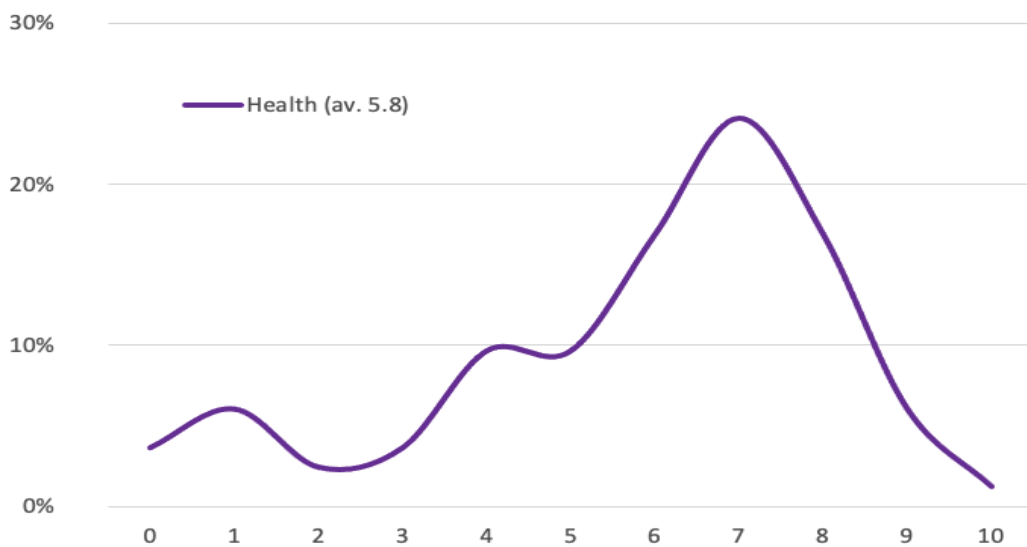
*On a scale of 0-10, how healthy would you say your youth ministry has been over this period, where 0 is 'not at all healthy' and 10 is 'extremely healthy'?*

*What would you say makes it healthy? What held you back from rating it higher?*

## Overall findings

The average health rating for youth ministry in the parish was 5.8 out of 10. The most frequent rating was 7 out of 10.

Based on vicars' ratings, 12% of parishes are very unhealthy (0-2), 23% are unhealthy (3-5), 41% are moderately healthy (6-7), and 24% are very healthy (8-10). These categories are used in later analysis.



## What do vicars regard as signs of health?

Vicars' explanatory comments in response to their health ratings fell into four main categories: young people, leadership, programs and whole church ownership. Each of these is discussed below.

### 1. Young People!

The number of young people in the parish makes a clear contribution to the perceived health of a parish youth ministry. Health ratings increased steadily from a low of 3.6 for those with no young people, to 4.3 for those with 1-5 young people, 5.7 for those with 6-15 young people, 6.9 for those with 16-30 young people, and 7.8 for those with more than 30 young people.

One vicar found hope in the simple fact that there is a youth ministry in the parish:

*That it exists and hasn't been tiny.<sup>5</sup>*

It is not just young people's *presence* that makes the difference, but also their level of *engagement*.

*They enjoy being together. We've put a lot of safe practices in place... There's some involvement in broader ministry which makes them feel part of the community of faith.*

*We have a good connection with the majority of youth in the church... African, Caucasian, and Indian kids: they come to things, activities, healthy Bible study ... The engagement is positive.*

The absence and/or disengagement of young people was the leading reason why parishes rated their ministry to young people as unhealthy or very unhealthy.

*No youth are attending, and I can't even find a way to attract my own teenage children to attend. There's nothing attractive about the church at all.*

There was frequent mention of the need to have a 'critical mass' of young people in order to keep them engaged with the church.

*They don't have a large enough peer group - there is some kind of catalyst change when youth have enough numbers to create peer relationships. We need at least ten more kids for that!*

*We've seen a steady consistent loss of youth to another youth group.*

## 2. Leadership

Having effective paid and/or volunteer leadership is another key factor that shapes perceived youth ministry health. When discussing their health assessment, leadership assets were discussed by 44% of those vicars who rated their youth ministry as healthy or very healthy, but by only 17% of those who rated their youth ministry as unhealthy or very unhealthy.

*We chose to move from a youth leader and youth group model as a ministry program to a catalyst team where youth and parents and the vicar were involved as a steering committee/working group.*

*The leaders in that space were consultative in what their program was going to be... there were more 'heads' involved in the subjects being tackled. ... That was the highpoint.*

Comments about leadership effectiveness included having a diverse team, a team that was engaged in planning, and having dedicated youth ministry staff. Parishes with no staff dedicated to youth ministry have a health estimate of 4.6; this jumps to 6.8 among parishes with youth ministry staff of up to 0.7 Full Time Equivalent (FTE), and remains steady at 6.8 for those with over 0.8 FTE dedicated to youth ministry

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<sup>5</sup> Verbatim responses from vicars are indicated throughout the report in centred italic text in purple.



*I've been in the parish for 11 years and it's the strongest it's ever been. It's had a dedicated staff person for the past 3 years. We've the same staff member. Fruitful season numerically and in depth.*

Even without paid youth ministry staff, parish leaders can engage parents and young people in ministry leadership.

*The positive that gets it to that level is a good team of volunteers. Our assistant minister has been coordinating the ministry but had a team of volunteers, young adults and parents, who have been investing in the youth.*

Leadership challenges were the most dominant root cause of low health ratings. In some instances this related to a lack of leaders, in others to the recent loss of leaders, or the difficulty in finding new leaders.

*It crumbled after the student minister left.*

*We have looked for someone to employ and have advertised, but we haven't had anyone apply.*

Having the wrong people in leadership roles can be just as limiting as having no leaders at all.

*The leaders aren't gifted relationally - there's a lack of connection, and a modelling of lack of connection which makes the group suffer.*

In reflecting on the loss of leaders, a number of vicars emphasised the importance of looking after the leaders you have.

*Had resignation of staff who have been responsible for youth ministry. Lack of support and resources for the staff members. Were asked to do more than the hours they were paid for allowed. Lack of support from their supervisor, and a lack of supervision. Lack of lay leaders who can support them in the ministry, and poor structures.*

### 3. Programs

One in three vicars (33%) explained their health rating by naming something related to a strength in their youth ministry program, whether that was having a strong discipleship focus (18%) or having tailored programs or activities offered for youth (11%). These numbers were all higher among parishes that rated their youth ministries as being healthier and those with larger numbers of young people attending.

*There are different points of contact with younger youth: a junior teens group on Sundays, boys and girls midweek ministry for senior primary, youth group on Friday night, a kids' band, kids in hospitality helping out, kids' talks in the morning service.*

*Some members will bring teenage grandchildren to church occasionally, so we may run a group if there are 2-3 teenagers present on a Sunday.*

A similar number of vicars (29%) discussed a deficit in some aspect of the programming for youth ministry, noting this as a limiting factor in their assessment of youth ministry health. This included a lack of discipleship focus (15%) and a lack of programs for youth (12%).

Comments from vicars indicate the need for youth ministry programming that focusses on discipleship and recognises young people's capacity to engage in spiritual concerns.

*Because we have such a strong family focus, it can mean that the youth can be a bit slow to move from family faith to personal faith.*

*Whilst [our youth ministry] has numbers, I don't know if there's been a lot of biblical input and learning. Competency has been put over character. Leaders land in a role because they're good at playing music, but aren't good at having a gospel conversation. Spiritually it is lacking.*

*There's a culture of taking youth out of the service during the sermon. We're not teaching young people how to listen to sermons. There's a view that youth can't understand the sermon, so we need to give them something specific for youth. I think we're dumbing it down and making youth think they don't need to be in worship. And there's not a lot of preparation put into the alternative.*

#### 4. Whole church ownership

One in four vicars (27%) gave this as a reason for their positive health rating. This factor incorporates having strong intergenerational relationships (15%), strong family support (14%), and buy-in for youth ministry across the whole parish (4%).

Whole church ownership is reflected in adult congregation members connecting with young people, long-term consistent planning for youth ministry, and valuing young people as full members of the people of God.

*We set up mentor programs for the three young people...Seeing on a Sunday morning the number of adults who are not parents who seek a conversation with the young people is a sign of health – and it's not exclusively the people asked to do mentoring.*

*We have youth as a key future focus and have done some work. It's been slowly progressing toward doing something over the past 7 years.*

*We have worked really hard at a couple of different aspects - particularly picking up kids at transition and bridge points (i.e. grade 6 into year 7) and the gaps a church often has. This reflects our value that they are part of today's church rather than the future of the church.*

The overall busyness of families can be an obstacle to youth ministry programming.

*The program isn't as full as it could be. Part of this is a realistic understanding of people's time pressure, for both lay leaders, and kids. Kids have pretty packed schedules. I'm aware the church can ask too much.*

#### 5. Other issues

**Outreach** – Youth ministry needs to reach out to young people outside the church, as well as to disciple young people in the church to mature faith. Only one in 12 parishes (8%) said they were positive about the health of their youth ministry due to its outreach focus. This gap is consistent with the low ratings given for health indicator 4 (see page 31). A similar proportion of vicars (9%) recognised a lack of outreach focus as a problem in their youth ministry.

*Not much outreach to others beyond the youth in the church; not much discernible growth in number.*

**COVID-19** – One in six vicars mentioned the impact of COVID-19 as a factor that influenced their assessment of youth ministry health over the last three years. This is discussed in detail in Appendix 1, page 47.

**Parish size** – Small and medium-sized parishes<sup>6</sup> rated themselves similarly at 5.4 and 5.5; the average health estimate jumps to 6.9 for churches with 3 or more FTE.

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<sup>6</sup> Full time equivalent staffing levels (for clergy, authorised stipendiary lay ministers, and other staff) as processed by the payroll of the Melbourne Anglican Diocesan Corporation (MADC) was used as a proxy measure for the overall size of each parish. 'Small' parishes have up to 1.5 FTE on the MADDC payroll; 'medium-sized' parishes have more than 1.5 and less than 3 FTE; 'large' parishes have 3 or more FTE.









## Health Indicator 1: Whole church commitment to young people

*'We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord.'* Psalm 78:4

A whole church commitment to young people regards teenagers as full members of the church community. A healthy youth ministry is one where teenagers are integrated contributors in the church community rather than being segregated beneficiaries.<sup>7</sup>

A church that is committed to young people makes a consistent long-term investment in resourcing youth ministry rather than gambling on short-term quick-fixes.<sup>8</sup>

A church leader promotes a whole church commitment to young people by paying attention to the issues facing young people in the congregation, and by promoting opportunities for young people to take their part in the life and mission of the church.<sup>9</sup>

A healthy youth ministry is one where teenagers are integrated contributors in the church community rather than being segregated beneficiaries. This is evident when:

- Young people are involved in all facets of congregational life
- Young people and their concerns inform church decision-making
- Young people and their concerns feature in the prayer life of the church and its leaders

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<sup>7</sup> Kara Eckmann Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin, *Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016), ch 6; Tim Gough, *Rebooted: Reclaiming Youth Ministry for the Long-Haul: A Biblical Framework* (London, UK: IVP, 2018), ch 5; Chap Clark, *Adoptive church: Creating an Environment Where Emerging Generations Belong* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018).

<sup>8</sup> Mark DeVries, *Sustainable Youth Ministry: why Most Youth Ministry Doesn't Last and What Your Church can do About it* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 11-12.

<sup>9</sup> Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, ch 2.

- Youth ministry strategy, resources and personnel are consistent and continuous over the long-term.

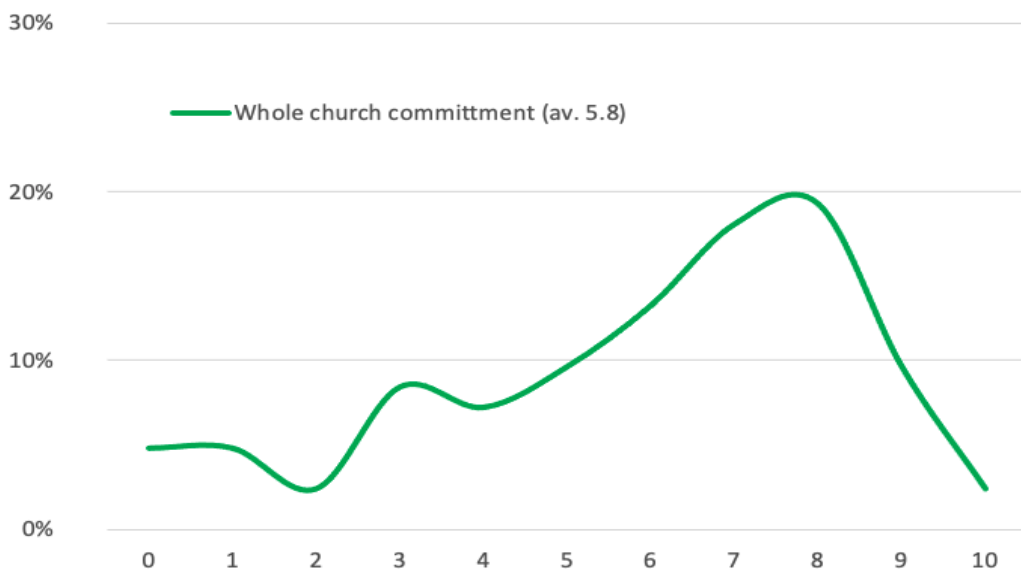
**We asked vicars:**

*On a scale 0-10, how integrated are young people in the overall life of your church?*

*What makes you say that?*

**Overall findings**

The average rating for health indicator 1 in each parish was 5.8 out of 10, the second highest of the four indicators. The most frequent rating was 8 out of 10.



**Patterns and trends**

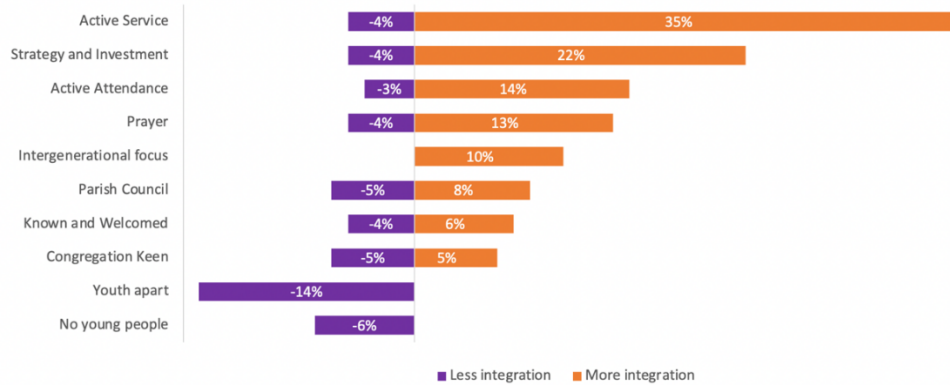
**Integration increases with the number of young people** involved in the parish. Integration ratings increased in steps: parishes with no young people had an average integration rating of 3.4, those with 1-5 or 6-15 had ratings just below 6 (5.9 and 5.8 respectively). The integration rating stepped up to an average of 6.7 for parishes with 16-30, and 6.6 with more than 30 young people.

Integration ratings were highest for vicars who were more hopeful for the future (6.7), compared to 4.8 and 4.6 for those who have little or moderate hope.<sup>10</sup>

**Factors contributing to positive integration of young people**

Vicars’ comments on their ratings indicate ten key factors that contribute to positive integration of young people in the life of the church. Most of these factors have a ‘mirror’ effect, promoting integration when they are present in the parish and undermining integration when they are absent.

<sup>10</sup> Based on hope ratings (see page 34) vicars were categorised as having little or very little hope (0-5, 26% of vicars), being moderately hopeful (6-7, 24%), or being very hopeful (8-10, 50%).



Together, these contributing factors can be summarised into three broad categories:

### 1. Young people being actively involved in the life of the church

Having young people actively serving in the congregation was the most frequently mentioned factor that shaped vicars' ratings for this indicator (35%). This is particularly evident for parishes with over 6 young people (48% of parishes with 6-15 young people, 43% 16-30, 46% 30+).

*I'm confident that our young people are involved in all parts of our congregational life, which is part of the wider program. We have young people involved in hospitality, reading, the choir, parish council.*

Regular attendance of young people (14% overall) is a particularly noted in parishes with 6-15 young people (21%). The significance of attendance *alone* diminishes as the number of young people increases beyond 15 (14% for 16-30, 8% for 30+).

*The young people are a prominent and visible part of the main Sunday worship. They are prayed for before they go out to the youth programs, and we hear from them after they return... They are much-loved integral members of our congregation.*

*We are really committed to involving [the youth] in the whole church. We listen to them carefully, they have a voice. I try and meet them personally. Sometimes I sit with them, talk with them and say 'I'm here for you'.*

Having youth separated from the rest of the congregation (14%) is the most significant reason given for lack of integration.

*It bothers me that we have non-church youth coming to youth group, but not into the church service with the rest of the congregation.*

*[The youth] have a separate youth program up to Year 8 on Sundays and older kids are not well integrated into Sunday worship.*

### 2. Commitment to young people

The second most frequently mentioned factor was having consistent strategy and investment in youth ministry. This point is less common among comments from vicars in the Oodthenong region (9%), compared to 21% in Jumbunna and 32% in Marmingatha. This factor is mentioned more frequently by parishes with 6-30 young people (30%), and medium-sized parishes (29%).

*We're putting time money and resources towards the ministry.*

### 3. Congregational warmth

Evidence of young people being integrated into the overall life of the congregation is particularly seen in young people being prayed for (13%). Young people being known and welcomed by congregation members is noted more frequently in parishes with 6-15 young people (21% versus 13% overall).

*We do have people praying specifically for the youth.*

*The families love to see the youth involved, so that's something that they look on warmly. The families that are most involved have the youth that are most involved. The families that are more peripheral, have youth that are less involved.*

Parishes with no young people spoke of being ready, if and when young families were to arrive.

*We try to plan for the possibility. If families with teenagers come there's a plan for people to meet with them. A philosophy of ministry exists.*



## Health Indicator 2: Clear plan for discipleship of young people

***'He is the one we proclaim...so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ' Colossians 1:28***

A clear plan for discipleship of young people lays out an intentional strategy to see young people become and grow to maturity as disciple-making disciples of Jesus.<sup>11</sup> A healthy youth ministry is one where young people are able to hear and respond to the gospel, receive Christian wisdom to address their concerns, and be guided in finding their way in the world in company with Jesus.<sup>12</sup>

A healthy youth ministry is one that designs ministry for and with young people that fits the gospel of Christ with the local context.

A healthy youth ministry sees young people established and growing in Christian faith that endures as they grow into young adulthood. This includes:

- Biblical teaching that addresses the concerns of adolescent life
- Young people taking their own initiative in discipleship and decision-making based on their Christian faith
- Clear goals and vision to invite, establish, and grow young people in faith in Christ
- An integrated discipleship pathway from childhood through to adulthood.

**We asked vicars:**

*On a scale of 0-10, how clear is the plan for discipleship as teenagers move through high school and*

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<sup>11</sup> Ken Moser, *Changing the World through Effective Youth Ministry* (Chatsood, NSW: Youthsurge Press, 2013); Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, ch 4; Gough, *Rebooted*, chs 1, 2.

<sup>12</sup> David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving Church... and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011).

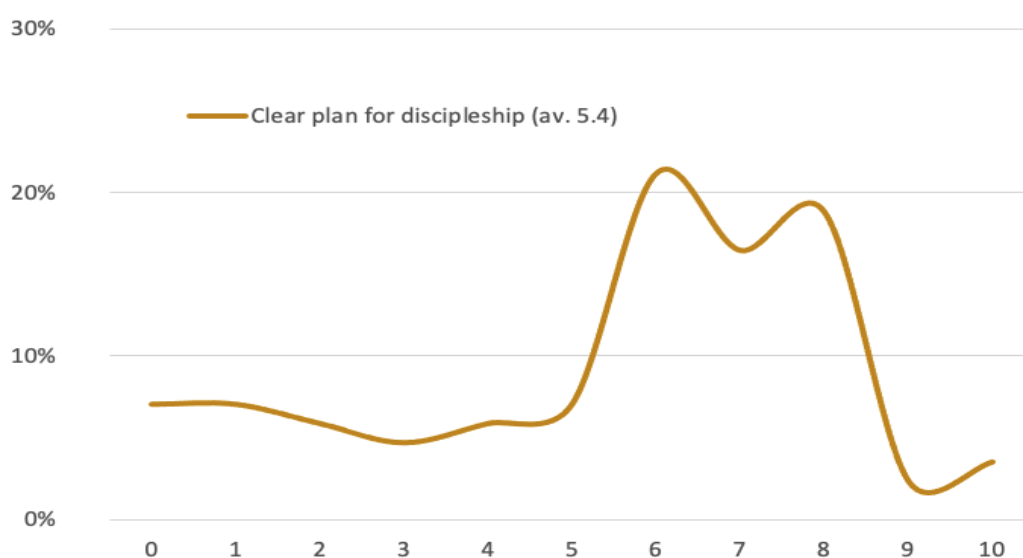


beyond?

What makes you say that?

## Overall findings

The average rating for health indicator 2 in each parish was 5.4 out of 10, the second lowest of the four indicators. The most frequent ratings were clustered around 6-8 out of 10.



**One in four parishes had no clear plan** in place for discipling teenagers (26%). A number of these parishes had a desire to plan for youth ministry (12%), and/or had a plan for discipling *children* but not one for *teenagers* (6%).

**A similar number of parishes were 'planning to plan'** (29%). This includes 11% who had plans in place that had not yet been enacted, and 8% were in the process of formulating a plan.

**This leaves 29% of parishes with clear plans for discipling young people.** One in five vicars (22%) described plans for discipleship such as youth ministry strategies, and confirmation preparation. One in eight (13%) noted that the discipleship of young people was part of the overall parish plan for discipleship.

## Patterns and trends

Planning for discipleship was rated **lower in the Oodthenong region** (average 4.9) compared to an average of 5.6 for parishes in the Jumbunna and Marmingatha regions.

The clarity of planning for discipleship **increases steadily with the number of young people** involved in the parish. For parishes with no young people, the average rating was 3.4. This rating then lifted steadily through the size categories: 4.1 for those with 1-5 young people; 5.3 for those with 6-15 young people; 6.5 for those with 16-30 young people and, 7.5 for those with 30+ young people. The only parishes to give themselves a rating of 9 or 10 had more than 30 young people.

Contrary to the overall trend, one parish with over 30 young people reported a discipleship planning rating of only 1 out of 10. This vicar commented:

*Though the youth ministry is 'full of non-Christians, with lots of activities', after many years of this ministry,*

*none of those kids are Christian. There has been no disciple making. So we're effectively starting from scratch.*

Ratings for discipleship planning also **increase steadily in line with church staffing levels** (average rating of 4.9 for parishes with up to 1.5 FTE staff, 5.2 for those with mid-sized staffing, and 6.6 for those with over 3 FTE staff), and **youth ministry staffing levels** (average rating of 4.4 for those no youth ministry staff; 5.9 for those with up to 0.7 FTE, and 6.7 for those with 0.8 FTE or more).

Vicars who were more hopeful about their youth ministry gave a higher average rating for discipleship planning. None of the parishes who had very little hope had a plan in place that was being acted upon.

## Factors contributing to a strong discipleship focus

Most vicars who responded commented on what stage their planning for discipleship was up to (noted above). However, some vicars did mention specific practices that contributed to discipleship, most notably Bible study groups (mentioned by 14% of vicars).

*The youth Bible study is a great context for growth. [Youth are] taking their own initiative in their own growth. They're inviting their friends.*

A number of comments highlight a perceived tension between teaching the Bible and attracting teenagers.

*The leaders don't use Bible studies as it might deter young people from coming to the youth group.*

*From the beginning it was based on youth ministries being really shallow. I heard from two of the teenagers who left to go to a more fun youth group with tons of kids. But the teens felt starved spiritually.*

Other practices that promoted discipleship were mentoring, family discipleship and having effective transitions between age-groups.

*I'm meeting with young people in a mentoring capacity. Discipleship has a strong focus here and teens are part of that.*

*We want kids coming to youth group having already spent 12 years reading the Bible with their family. ... [We aim to] take a long term view and training for parents to raise disciples.*

*We have a group for 12-14 year olds in Sunday school and we talk about how they're going to transition into youth group. This is our strength. We have lots of bridges between Sunday school and senior groups. It's quite balanced.*

The most frequently mentioned obstacle to effective planning for discipleship is not having enough young people to warrant a plan (10%), or not having the leaders needed to make it happen (9%).

*It is 100% Vicar driven and therefore not as impactful because I am the only one doing it.*



## Health Indicator 3: Dedicated personnel for discipling young people

*'We were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.'* 1 Thessalonians 2:8

Young people need adult believers to draw alongside them saying, 'Can I help you follow Jesus the way I follow Jesus?'<sup>13</sup> Each young person needs at least five adults,<sup>14</sup> from various age-groups, who they can call on as pastors, mentors, coaches, advocates, role models, advisors, supporters, encouragers, intercessors.

A healthy youth ministry has adult leaders who are equipped to serve young people with relevant and engaging gospel content<sup>15</sup> in a warm and safe relational context.<sup>16</sup> This is demonstrated by factors such as:

- Adult congregation members know young people by name
- Young people have non-parent adults they can call on in times of need
- Dedicated youth leaders have appropriate experience and expertise.

**We asked vicars:**

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<sup>13</sup> Young Anglican's Project, Engage! <https://engagediscipleship.org/>

<sup>14</sup> Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, Growing Young, ch 3; Gough, Rebooted, ch 3, 6.

<sup>15</sup> Kara Powell, Growing Young, 'Empathise'; Tim Gough, Rebooted, 'Connect authentically'

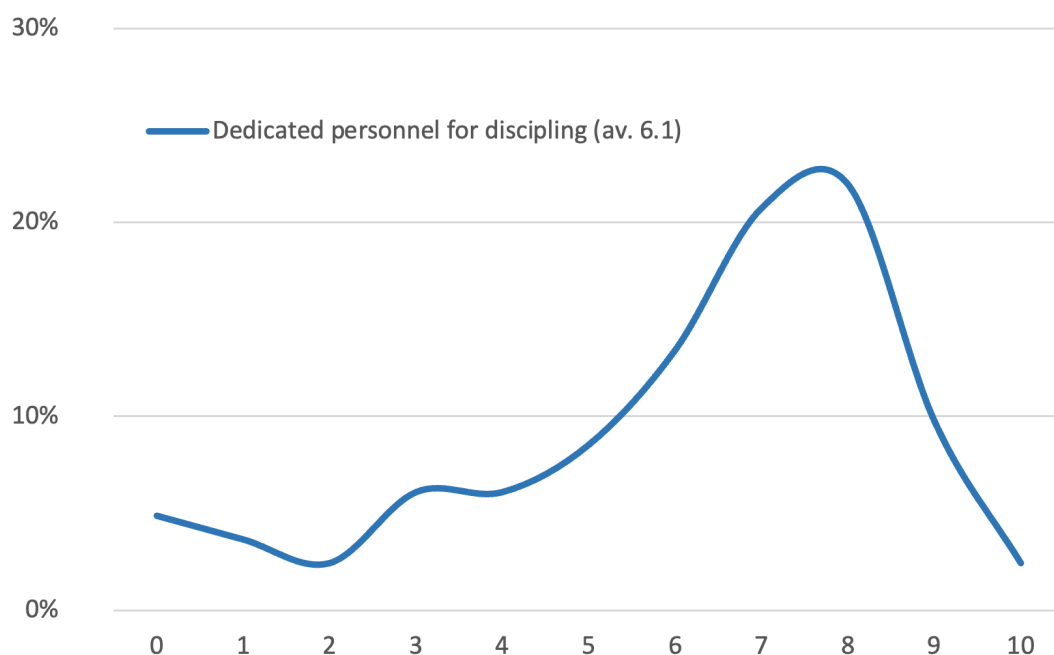
<sup>16</sup> Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, Growing Young, ch 5.

On a scale of 0-10, how well-equipped are youth leaders for their role of discipling young people?

What makes you say that?

## Overall findings

The average rating for health indicator 3 in each parish was 6.1 out of 10, the highest of the four indicators. The most frequent rating was 8 out of 10.



## Patterns and trends

Equipping of youth leaders was closely tied to levels of **youth ministry staffing**. Parishes with no youth ministry had a rating of 4.6 for health indicator 3. The average rating then jumped to 7.1 for parishes with youth ministry staff of up to 0.7 FTE, and 7.5 for those with 0.8 FTE or more.

Perceptions of leaders' capability took a dip in parishes with 1-5 young people (4.8) compared to 5.6 for those with no young people, and 5.7 for those with 6-15. Parishes with 16 or more young people were more positive about how equipped their leaders were (7.5 for those with 16-30 young people, 7.2 for those with 30 or more).

## Factors contributing to positive equipping of youth ministry leaders

When asked to explain their rating on this indicator, vicars consistently spoke of two key issues: having leaders in the first place, and then having training opportunities available for these leaders.

### 1. Having youth leaders

One in five vicars (20%) mentioned the benefit of having a dedicated staff member or clergyperson, most often a curate. One in eight (12%) mentioned having sufficient numbers of youth leaders.

*Excellent curate.*

*[There is a] dedicated youth minister who spends a lot of time investing deeply in the youth leaders.*

*There is a great commitment to the youth. And prior to the current leaders there were others.*

Similarly, the biggest challenge for having well-equipped leaders was **not having enough leaders** in the first place (30%). Leadership gaps were mentioned by 58% of vicars who rated their youth ministry below 5, and included having no youth leaders at all, having too few leaders, or having leaders with insufficient experience (4%).

*We don't really have anyone doing it except the Vicar and one other person.*

*We just need more leaders.*

Vicars also spoke of the challenges of having young leaders, as well as having older leaders with immature faith.

*The problem we have is that the last youth pastor aimed to invite younger aged Christians to be youth leaders, but they are inexperienced.*

*Adult members of the church are lacking the personal conviction of faith, the awareness of the work of the Spirit, and the blessing of God, that would enable them to share faith persuasively with young people.*

## **2. Having training opportunities**

Every vicar who spoke about specific training opportunities for youth leaders (32% of all those interviewed) rated their youth ministry 5 or higher for this scale. Beneficial training included in-parish training as well as external activities.

*Our youth leaders are very equipped - they do beach mission and Scripture Union etc. The Diocese has been involved in training them too.*

Meanwhile, insufficient training was other main negative influence on this indicator. The need for better training and equipping was named by 22% of vicars. None of the vicars who gave ratings below 5 named specific training received by leaders in the parish.

*We have sincere people who love the Lord, but people are not taking on ministry roles. There are very few activities you could call 'a ministry' (other than people just coming to church)... There is no idea what discipleship is, what mentoring or equipping is.*

*The people who have been involved with youth for a long time think they're really well equipped and push back on suggestions that they need further training. ...There hasn't been any 'equipping' of people for a long time. Congregation members have been 'worn out' and are too tired for more training.*





## Health Indicator 4: Outward vision for reaching young people

*'Go and make disciples of all nations.' Matthew 28:19*

A youth ministry that grows the faith of Christian young people is a youth ministry that reaches out to non-Christian young people. A church that is committed to young people includes young people within the mission of God<sup>17</sup> and aims to engage constructively with the world outside the church.<sup>18</sup>

A healthy youth ministry does not just help young people remain in the faith, but seeks to enable them to participate in God's mission in the world. This is evident when:

- Young people are trained and equipped as evangelists and are eager to invite friends to church activities
- Young people from non-church background are involved as visitors, seekers, and converts
- Information about the youth ministry is accessible to visitors and newcomers
- Church members are connected with community youth services (such as schools, sporting clubs, youth centre).

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<sup>17</sup> Gough, Rebooted, ch 7.

<sup>18</sup> Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, Growing Young, ch 7.

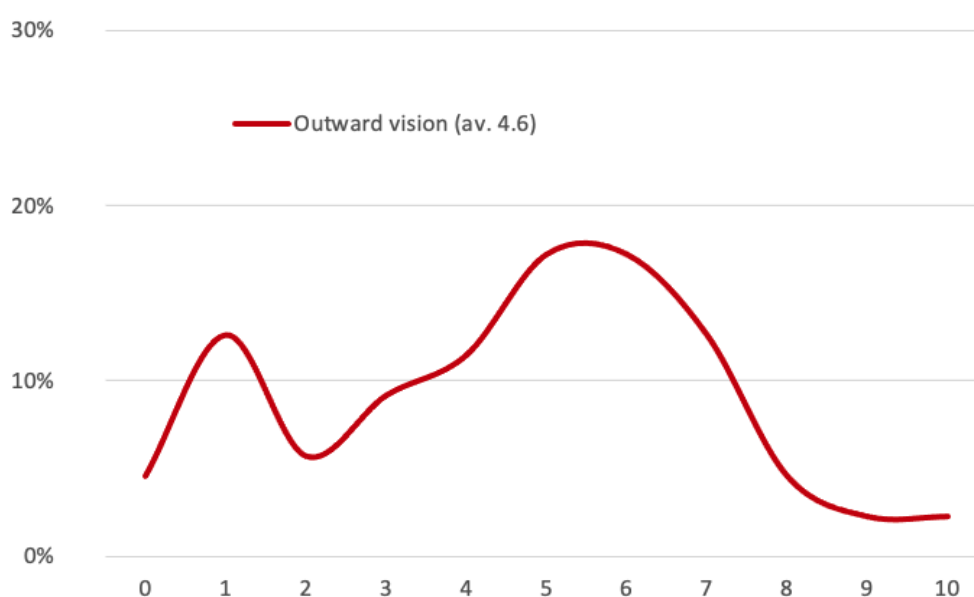
## We asked vicars:

*On a scale of 0-10, how active is your church and youth ministry in reaching out to non-Christian young people?*

*What makes you say that?*

## Overall findings

The average rating for health indicator 4 in each parish was 4.6 out of 10, the **lowest of the four indicators**. The most frequent ratings were clustered around 5-6, with a significant secondary peak at 1.



## Patterns and trends

Ratings for outreach focus were consistently low across most parishes. Two in three vicars (68%) rated the outreach focus of the youth ministry as the lowest or equal lowest of their four indicators.

The lowest ratings were from parishes with no dedicated youth ministry staff (3.7), and those with only 1-5 young people attending (2.6).

A positive rating for outreach focus was a key indicator of greater hope for the future. Those with little or very little hope gave an average rating of 3.1. The rating increased to 3.9 for those with moderate hope, but jumped to 5.6 among those who were very hopeful.

## Factors contributing to positive outreach focus

Parishes with positive outreach ratings were specifically characterised by young people inviting their friends and having connections with local schools.

*Evangelism comes mainly through our teens: connecting with friends; school or sporting clubs; kids inviting other kids.*

*The youth minister has a before school breakfast at the High School across the road, but opportunities are limited - slow and steady building of relationships with the school.*

Running **specific evangelistic events** was only named by vicars who rated their outreach focus at 5 or 6 out of 10. These comments were far more prevalent among parishes from Marmingatha region (13%). Only 3% of parishes in Jumbunna and 5% in Oodthenong made comments about specific evangelistic events. This approach to outreach was named to a similar extent by parishes with no young people (11%), those with 16-30 (14%), and those with 30+ (15%). It was not favoured by the small youth ministries with groups of 1-5 (5%) or 6-15 (0%).

## Obstacles to positive outreach focus

The low average for outreach focus (4.6 out of 10) may still be an overstatement of the health of this aspect of parish youth ministries. From the extended comments following this rating, 55% of parishes struggle with outreach in some way, and **39% of parishes said they had no active outreach** to young people outside of the church.

Challenges within youth ministries reflect an overall absence of **outreach culture** in the church as a whole.

*One or two youth are great at inviting friends in. Given the opportunities that we have, [there's] not a massive culture of inviting people in.*

*[There's] not a good understanding amongst youth and parishioners about linking community and the mission of the gospel.*

For 10% of parishes, outreach had become less of a focus as a result of **refocussing the youth ministry** on faith formation and spiritual growth of members rather than on running attractational social groups. This was particularly prevalent among groups with more than 30 young people (38%).

*Our efforts have been to strengthen those we have and help them have their own faith. We haven't focused on making it an invitational cohort.*

# Hope

## We asked vicars:

*On a scale of 0-10, how hopeful do you feel about the future of your church's youth ministry over the next three years?*

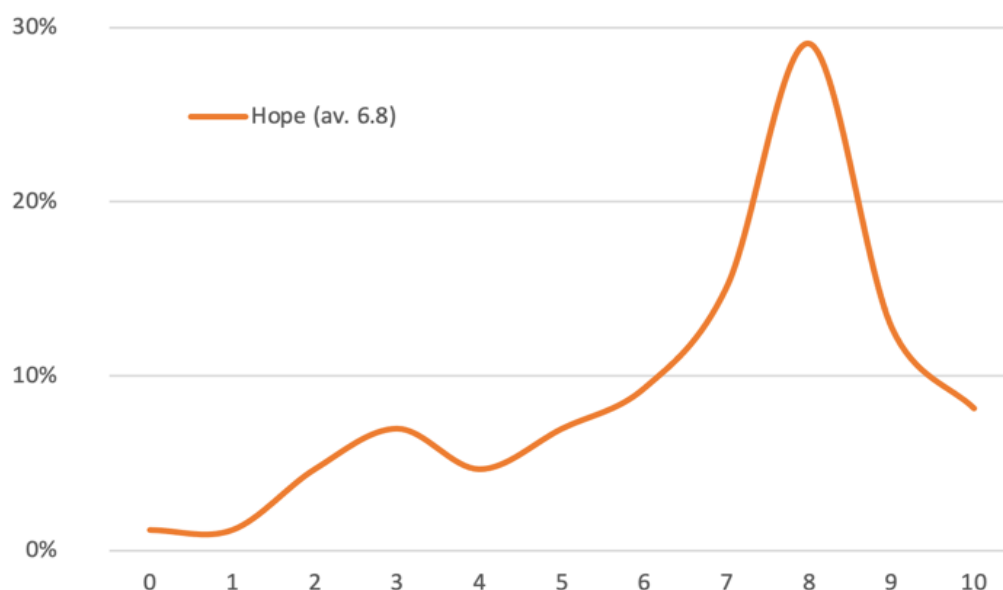
*What would you say is encouraging as you look at the future of your youth ministry?*

*What would you say concerns you about the future of your youth ministry? What are the obstacles you face?*

## Overall findings

The average rating for how hopeful vicars were for the youth ministry in each parish was 6.8 out of 10. The most frequent rating was 8 out of 10.

Based on these ratings, 26% of vicars have little or very little hope for the future (0-5), 24% are moderately hopeful (6-7), and 50% are very hopeful. These categories have been used in the preceding analysis.



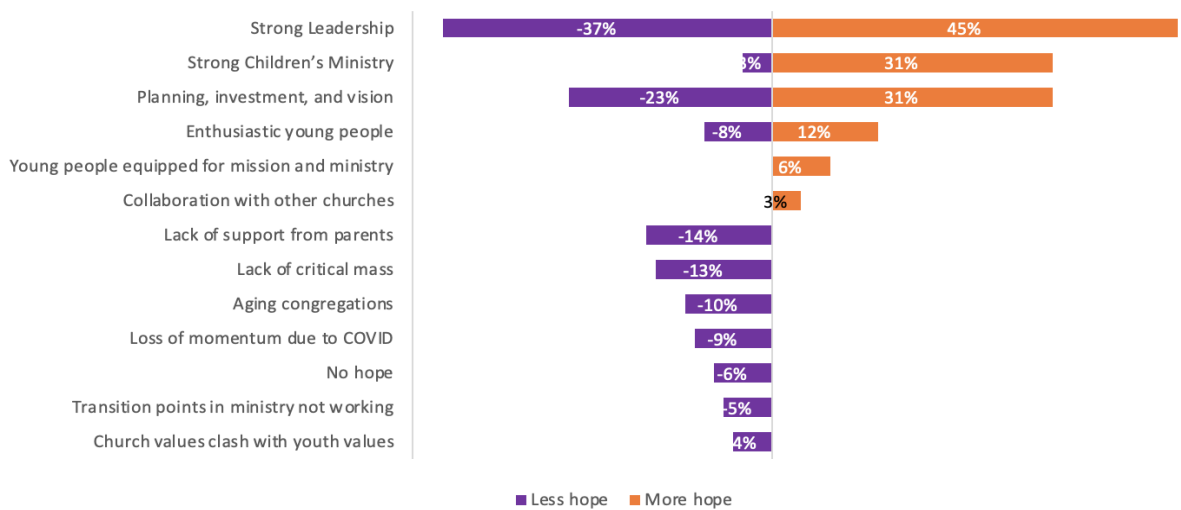
The vicars interviewed were more positive about their hopes for youth ministry than they were about the health of their youth ministry. Overall rating for hope was 6.8, compared with 5.8 for health. One in five (21%) were 2 or more points less hopeful than healthy; 11% gave the same rating for both (+/-1) and two thirds (68%) rated hope 2 or more points higher than health.

**Higher hope ratings were given by parishes with more than five young people.** Those with only a few young people (4.8) had as much hope as those with none (4.7). Hope jumped to 7.2 among parishes with 6-15 young people, and though hope continued to rise with additional young people, the increase tapered off (8.1 for those with 16-30 young people and 8.3 for those with 30+ young people).

**Parishes that consider themselves healthy at present are more hopeful for the future.** Hope ratings increased from 5.1 for very unhealthy parishes (those with health ratings of 0-2), to 5.7 for the unhealthy (3-5), 7.1 for the healthy (6-7), and 8.5 for the very healthy (8-10).

## What factors influenced hope?

Vicars' explanatory comments in response to their hope ratings fell into thirteen key factors: four factors had a 'mirror' effect, encouraging hope by their presence and reducing it by their absence. Two factors were only named as factors promoting hope; seven factors were only named as detracting from hope.



### 1. Leadership

Effective leadership is a key driver of hope, mentioned by 45% of all vicars (including 52% of those who are moderately hopeful and 58% of those who are very hopeful). Within this category were comments about the promise of new leaders (27%), having 'good leaders' (19%), and having longstanding leaders (5%).

*This is the first time in years that we've been able to maintain the same youth minister. In the past we've had training curates be responsible for youth. So we were constantly changing leaders.*

*In the budget I don't see us employing a staff member anytime soon, but we have a strong group of youth leaders who have been committed to running a good youth ministry.*

Conversely, leadership gaps reduced hope. The negative impact of leadership woes was felt by all vicars, throughout the spectrum of low to high hope (36% of those with little hope; 38% of those with moderate hope; 37% of those with high hopes). Leadership difficulties included having leaders who 'weren't great', or who had recently left, or having no leaders available. Indeed, the positive influence of leaders was often expressed in the fear that if they left, the church would be in trouble.

*Being in a Diocese with a lack of clergy, we are worried that we will lose our youth ministry staff member as he might be head-hunted elsewhere.*

*I will retire in a couple of years; I am not sure if the youth group will continue.*

### 2. Planning



Hope came from effective planning: 31% of vicars drew hope from having a plan or vision for youth ministry; while 23% had less hope due to the absence of budgeting or vision for youth ministry. The positive impact of planning was particularly present among the most hopeful (49%).

*There is support from parish council. There is support from the wardens, who are willing to commit monetary resources to it. If we don't make the investment in terms of not just money but support, there isn't much of a future. It's about intentionality, and the life of the ministry cannot happen without that.*

*We've got a challenge because we're going to enter into a building project which will stretch the church financially, so hiring a youth person would be a further stretch.*

### 3. Pipeline

Hope was also a product of having a flow from children's ministry into youth ministry. This was noted by 31% of vicars overall, increasing in frequency with parish size from a low of 22% of parishes with small staff teams to 32% for the medium-sized, and 52% for parishes with large teams.

For those parishes who did not have any young people at present, having a pipeline from children's ministry was their main source of hope (42%).

*We've got a good Sunday Club ministry and mid-week after school activities that are healthy and engaging the local community. If that wave can continue, and if we can manage the transition then there is hope.*

### 4. Momentum

The biggest factors driving hope down can be grouped under the broad heading of 'low energy' or 'low momentum'. Mentioned by one in three vicars overall (31%), this includes a lack of critical mass of young people (13%), youth ministry being low priority for the young people themselves (8%), and youth ministry being a low priority for parents (14%).

*Our church is old and old-fashioned. If you were a young Christian, I'm not sure you would want to come to our church... One person was friendly to a friend who came once. No one else engaged with her.*

*The increasing busyness and difficulty of gathering a group is a challenge. It's hard starting with a smallish cohort.*

*Youth ministry is still small, so one family moving on has a large impact.*

# Youth Ministry Personnell

We asked vicars how many volunteer leaders they had working with teenagers, and whether there were dedicated staff with youth ministry responsibilities.

## Volunteers

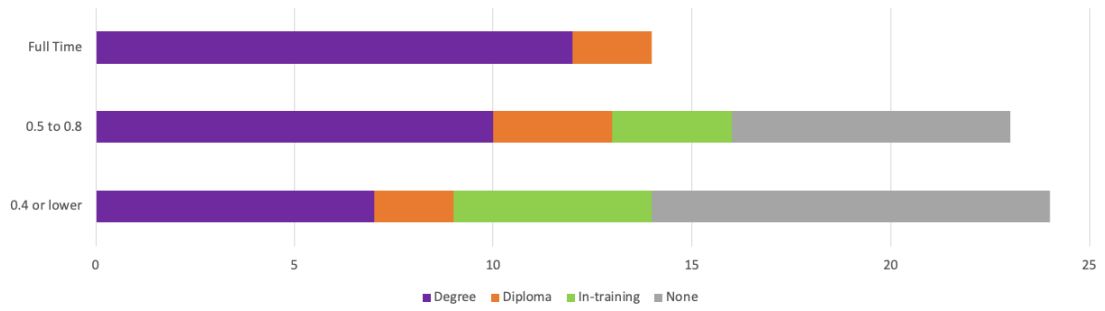
Overall, there were 387 volunteers serving in youth ministry across 81 parishes. Most youth ministry teams had five or fewer members, with team sizes increasing with the number of young people involved in the parish.

Number of Volunteers	Number of parishes (% of total parishes with volunteers)	Average number of Young People
0	16 (20%)	3.9
1-5	46 (57%)	12.8
6-10	9 (11%)	33.4
11-30	10 (12%)	40.4

## Employed Youth Ministry Staff

Vicars provided details of up to four employed staff who had some responsibility for ministry among teenagers.

There were 61 people employed in youth ministry in the parishes of the Diocese. 14 were employed in a full-time youth ministry role, 23 employed half time or more, and the remaining 24 employed less than a half time load.



*Ministry qualifications by Youth Ministry Employment load (FTE)*

Of the 61 people employed, 29 have a theological degree, 7 have a diploma, 8 are in theological training. The remaining 17 have no formal qualification in theology or ministry.

Note that these roles specify the proportion of an employed position dedicated to youth ministry. Of those who were employed with a fractional load dedicated to youth ministry, eight had other ministry responsibilities that made up a full-time position. Four of these had a half-time role in youth ministry; one gave two days a week, and three one day a week to youth ministry.

# Training opportunities and needs

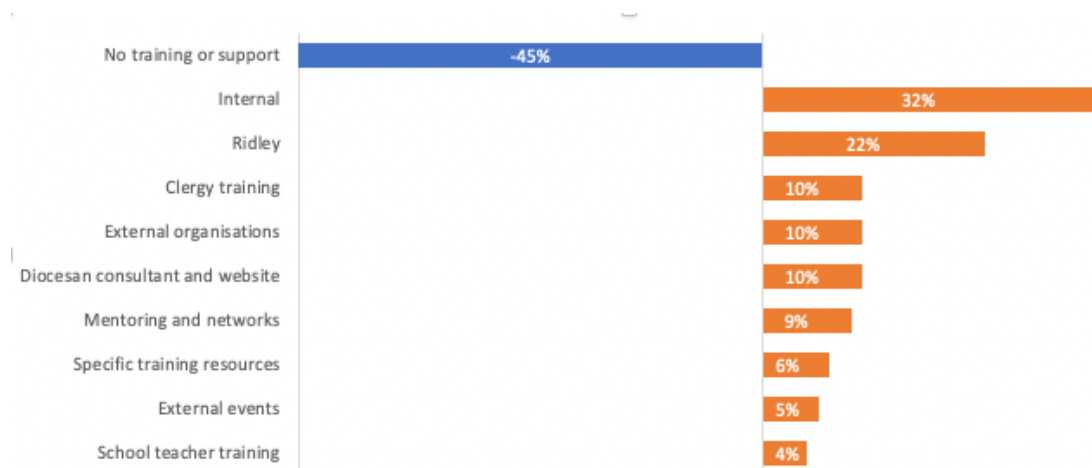
We asked vicars:

*What support or training have your youth leaders had access to, and found helpful?*

*Is there other support or training you would like for them?*

## Training Opportunities

55% of vicars interviewed described some form of training and support that they had found to be useful for the youth leaders in their parish. This included mention of training that was not specific to church-based youth ministry, such as clergy training (10%) or experience from school teaching (4%). Excluding these, just under half (44%) of vicars named some kind of training specific to church-based youth ministry.



The most frequently named form of useful training was provided internally (32%); though this was largely limited to parishes with employed youth ministry staff (10% of those with no youth ministry staff, 53% of those with up to 0.7FTE, 60% of those with 0.8FTE or greater).

Even where internal training was being provided, there was a general sense of uncertainty from vicars surrounding the training that was occurring. The statement, 'Our youth minister provides training. Not sure what he does exactly' could speak to a high level of trust; but could also be a point of weakness.

This leaves 45% of vicars who have not found any youth ministry training that has been helpful for them. Many simply rely on parishioners' personal experience of life, parenting, or school teaching:

*They've got a lot of experience and knowledge, but I don't know of any specific training that they've actually gone through. Just a mature couple and mature young adults.*

*One woman who I expect to do much of the discipleship work is a high school teacher, and has good skills with adolescents, but hasn't had much training in youth ministry.*

Just over one in five vicars (22%) mentioned the value of training provided through **Ridley College**, predominantly the Ridley Centre for Children's and Youth Ministry Training Days, along with the youth ministry units in the degree programs.

That effective youth ministry requires more than just practical skills is captured in this comment about the value of connecting with **theological education** at Ridley College and Trinity Theological School:

*What principally concerns me is the programs outside of theological education: they tend to work against the question of spirituality. Secular resilience training is great, but those programs don't have any faith component or even dialogue.*

The value of **external organisations and training events** was mentioned by 14% of vicars, all of whom were from evangelical parishes, and mostly from those with larger numbers of young people. The most frequently named was Scripture Union Beach Missions. Other organisations or events included the Victorian Christian Youth Convention (VCYC), Church Missionary Society Summer Under the Son (SUTS) Youth Camp, and the Engage training weekend.

Valuable support and training from the **Diocesan Youth Ministry consultant** was specifically named by 10% of vicars from a combination of small non-evangelical parishes and medium-sized and larger evangelical parishes. Vicars found it beneficial to 'meet with Brian<sup>19</sup> over coffee' and valued the coaching and support provided for children's and youth ministry leaders.

**Mentoring and networking** among youth ministry leaders was almost equally common among churches with no young people (17%) and those with over 30 young people (15%).

*We have found the best help by looking at other examples of youth ministry. Our youth minister has a mentoring relationship with another youth leader. They get the benefit of talking practitioner-to-practitioner.*

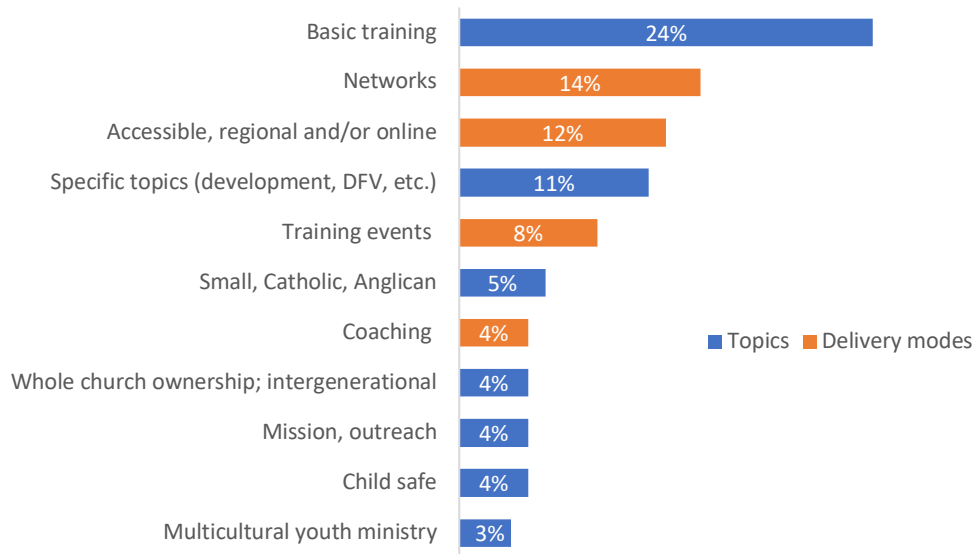
## Training needs

Three in four vicars (77%) named some kind of training need or opportunity that they would like to see available for the youth leaders in their parish. These responses were divided between specific topics for training (44%), and different modes of training (25%).

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<sup>19</sup> Diocesan Youth Ministry Consultant, Brian Holden.





Desirable modes of training for youth ministry included networks (14%), training events (8%) and coaching (4%). One in eight (12%) also called for more accessible training, whether delivered online or in regional areas.

*Getting people to attend things is hard. If there was an online course that they could do at their own pace and time, that would be ideal. One date/time event is not ideal. Something they can access in their own schedule is good.*

For some vicars, the question of training needs was a case of not knowing what they don't know. Responses to the question about other support or training they would like for the youth leaders in the parish included:

*Yes! But what it would look like, I don't know.*

*Something, but I don't know what - maybe a discipleship course?*

The most frequent request for training in specific topics was some kind of basic training for youth ministry (24%).

*Leading basic Bible study, open conversations, child-safe training, learning about life stages of young people - developmental stage awareness.*

*Leadership training - how to run a session/meeting? Leaders are a little unsure how to do things. Crash course in leadership for new leaders.*

*I'm wondering if there is a curriculum that youth leaders and children's leaders could work through.*

Basic training was particularly named by parishes with 6-15 and 16-30 young people (30% and 36%). Based on youth ministry staffing levels, the need for basic training was most frequently mentioned by parishes who had employed youth ministry staff of 0.8 FTE or higher (40%). While these parishes are most likely to be providing in-house training, there seems to be an appetite for training resources to facilitate those efforts.

A number of vicars noted the need to connect skills training to more general training in personal faith and discipleship of leaders themselves.

*We need training in character over competency.*

*It would be fantastic to see [our leaders] with more of a Gospel-ministry, understanding the importance of their own discipleship and the way they relate to kids. We have willing people, but without a vision of youth ministry.*

Communication and marketing seem to present a particular challenge to parishes in connecting with training opportunities. One vicar knew what could be useful but said, 'I'm not sure if the resource we are after is already out there.' There were a few requests for some kind of low-cost, online course as a basic introduction to youth ministry: 'Certificate level at Ridley and online would be good.' Such a course already exists (the Ridley Certificate unit Introduction to Youth Ministry). Clearly the communication and promotion of this, and other existing resources, has room for improvement.

Other specific topics included helping small churches start a youth ministry from nothing, how to do effective intergenerational ministry, mission and outreach, and multicultural youth ministry. A small number of comments were also made about the challenges involved in child safe ministry:

*The compliance issues are necessary, but problematic. All the checks are too complicated.*

There was a particular request for training and resources for youth ministry in contexts other than large evangelical parishes. A number of vicars expressed the desire to see training and resources for youth ministry that is distinctively Anglican.

*There is an assumption that youth means evangelical.*

*Things like Taize are huge in Europe - it would be good to see other more contemplative resources available.*

*I would like a program run by the Diocese for training youth leaders rather than externally, so we have the Diocese's vision. Doesn't need to be serious, but just a gathering one Saturday, informally. We would be happy to pay for it. With the Diocese running it they would know what is good for the Anglican youth leaders. We would be part of the Diocese's vision and mission.*





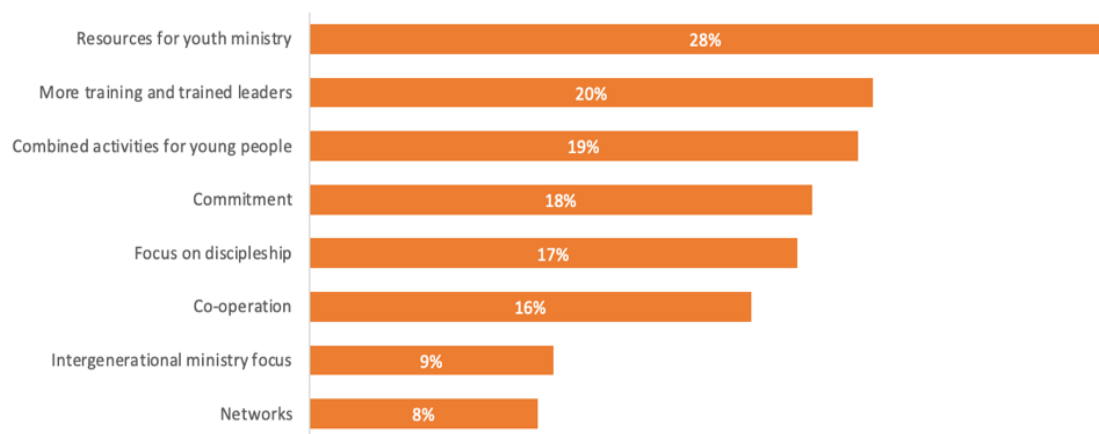


# Vision for youth ministry across the Diocese

## We asked vicars:

*What would you like to see for youth ministry across the Diocese of Melbourne?*

This question was asked of all vicars (n=186 parishes), including those who did not go on to do the long survey. Interviewers focused in on vicars' suggestions for *what the Diocese of Melbourne can do as a whole do to support and promote ministry among young people.*



The most frequent response called for the provision of **resources** (in personnel and materials) to equip parishes for more effective youth ministry (28%). This request was often connected with the request for training to provide an increasing number of **well-equipped leaders for youth ministry** (20%). Among various resources mentioned, equipping parishes for more effective **inter-generational ministry** (9%) was the most frequent specific request.

A desire to work together was indicated by calls for greater **co-operation** between parishes and across theological traditions (16%), **combined activities for young people** (19%), and **networks** of youth ministry leaders (8%).

At a more fundamental level, vicars called for a greater **commitment** on behalf of the whole Diocese for strengthening our ministry among young people (18%), including greater investment of time, money, and prayer. Many noted that we cannot expect a renewal in discipleship of young people without a **renewal of discipleship** among all our people in all our parishes and at every level of our common life (17%).

## Commitment

18% of vicars asked for a greater commitment to youth ministry from the Diocese – captured succinctly by this rhetorical question:

*How serious is the Diocese about youth ministry really?*

Commitment is not limited to an investment of money but cannot be separated from it. The following comment brings together several concerns raised by vicars in a vision for a well-resourced Diocesan Youth Ministry Department:

*[I'd like to see a] Youth Ministry department that resources and facilitates youth ministry in every and any church that would like to have it running, particularly organising combined outreach events, providing resources for smaller churches, identifying emerging leaders with a pathway toward vocational youth ministry, combined camping experiences.*

Curiously, this request was heard from only 4% of parishes with 1-5 young people, and 23% of all others. It may be that those with only a few young people are more focussed on the immediate needs of their parish (resources 31%, combined activities 25%) than on the structural issues facing the Diocese as a whole. Vicars calling for greater commitment from the Diocese overall were most likely to assess their youth ministry as healthy (38%) or very healthy (25%).

## Resources and training to support growing youth ministry

Requests for greater resources and training to support the growth and health of youth ministry across the Diocese were raised by 40% of vicars.

These requests included resourcing through dedicated personnel as well as ministry tools to address specific areas of challenge (28%). This was the most frequent request in all three regions (28% Jumbunna, 31% Marmingatha, 23% in Oodthenong), across evangelical and non-evangelical traditions (28% in both), and in all but the largest sizes of youth ministry (24% of those with no young people, 31% of those with 1-5 young people, 33% of those with 6-15 young people, 29% of those with 16-30 young people). Resources were requested less frequently by parishes with the 30 or more young people (15%), perhaps because these parishes are well-served by internal capacity, or already have resources on hand.

Requests for recruiting and training more leaders for youth ministry (20%) were most frequently heard from youth ministries with 6-15 young people (28%). Fewer churches with larger youth ministries mentioned the need for training (8%), most likely because these parishes were more likely to have well-equipped leaders (54%) and have found useful training options in external programs (15%).

A number of responses noted youth ministry is more likely to grow from 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down'. One vicar observed:

*The local church carries the vast majority of the load for youth ministry, and I don't see much coming from the Diocese. That's not entirely bad, because locally is where youth ministry happens, and the local church needs to be invested.*

Yet, they went on to say that having a well-resourced, multi-staff Diocesan Youth Ministry office 'would be really handy'.

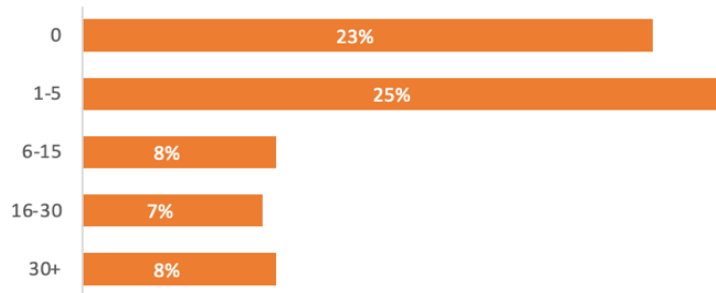
Requests for specific ministry resources included providing 'contracts and job descriptions that are consistent and appropriate' and providing resources to support youth ministry in regional and rural parishes.

There was some mention of resources for multicultural youth ministry, largely coming from parishes with large multicultural and cross-cultural communities who are struggling with the challenges of engaging the Australian-born (or Australian-raised) children of migrant families. Perhaps though, given the multicultural nature of the majority of the regions covered by the Diocese of Melbourne, it is troubling to observe that resourcing for multicultural youth ministry appears to be a niche concern.



## Working together

Connected with concerns about needing a 'critical mass' of young people, vicars frequently expressed a desire for more combined activities for discipleship and outreach among young people. A number of vicars expressed interest in working with neighbouring parishes to build a combined youth group. Requests for combined activities for young people are clearly most weighted toward smaller youth ministries (24% 0-5, 8% of 6+).



The Victorian Christian Youth Convention (VCYC), Church Missionary Society Summer Under the Sun Youth Camp (SUTS Youth), Youth Alive, and Soul Survivor were all mentioned as valuable existing opportunities to get young people together. Others, often recalling experiences of previous generations, called for combined Diocesan events specifically for Anglican young people.

*The big gatherings at the Cathedral. They are important to give youth an identity as youth in Anglican churches. Things like that are great. An opportunity to encounter.*

Requests for providing more resources for youth ministry were connected with calls for greater co-operation and wider Diocesan investment.

*Each parish has to come up with their own stuff. What do you do when you are a small church and you only have one or two families with youth? It would be great to have a more robust plan or resources.*

*Overall problem in ADOM is that we all work individually. If we could get a vision for banding together to see young people disciplined and growing in faith that would be great!*



Appendices



# Appendix 1: The impact of COVID-19 on youth ministry health

Interviews with vicars were conducted from 30 April through to 25 August 2021. This spanned lockdowns four (27 May to 10 June) and five (15-27 July), and the beginning of lockdown 6 (5 August).

Unprompted, one in six vicars (17%) named negative impacts of COVID-19 as impacting on the overall health of the youth ministry over the previous three years.

*Covid really disrupted things. Youth didn't want to be online. Some haven't come back to church or youth group.*

*The logistics of the last couple of years - infrequency of being able to gather. We have been meeting only occasionally, but still managed to have 2 young people take first communion, and one get confirmed. But it hasn't been in ideal settings because of Covid. Lockdown has put a strain on things happening in the parish.*

We later asked vicars what impact COVID-19 has had on the number of young people who are involved in the parish. The responses varied significantly across the Diocese.

Overall, 34% reported a negative impact (whether through losing young people, young people being less engaged, losing leaders, or closing programs). On the other hand, 15% reported a positive impact (gaining young people or starting new programs).

For the remaining half of parishes interviewed (47%), COVID-19 had a neutral impact overall, either because there was no impact, or because they had rebounded from the challenges of lockdown following the return to in-person ministries.

The impact of COVID-19 appears to be heavily influenced by the size of the youth ministry in the parish. However, the effect is not necessarily a linear one:

- Among parishes with **no young people**, half (50%) reported no impact from COVID-19 on their youth ministry, while 25% reported a loss of young people.
- Among parishes with **1-5 young people**, 62% reported no impact from COVID-19. None of the parishes in this category had a positive outcome from the pandemic, and 24% reported some combination of negative outcomes, largely through loss of engagement or regular attendance by young people.
- Parishes with **6-15 young people** have found the pandemic particularly challenging. Two in five (42%) reported some combination of negative factors, including 30% reporting a loss of young people. Meanwhile one in six (15%) reported an uptick, either gaining young people or starting new programs.
- Parishes with **16-30 young people** fared better than others, with one in three (36%) reporting an increase in the number of young people involved in their parish. However, a similar number (29%) experienced a negative outcome, with 14% dropping numbers of young people.
- Parishes with **30+ young people** did it tough during the pandemic but have also been quite resilient. Almost half (46%) reported negative impacts, largely due to young people finding it hard to engage with online ministry (23%). However, these parishes were also most likely to

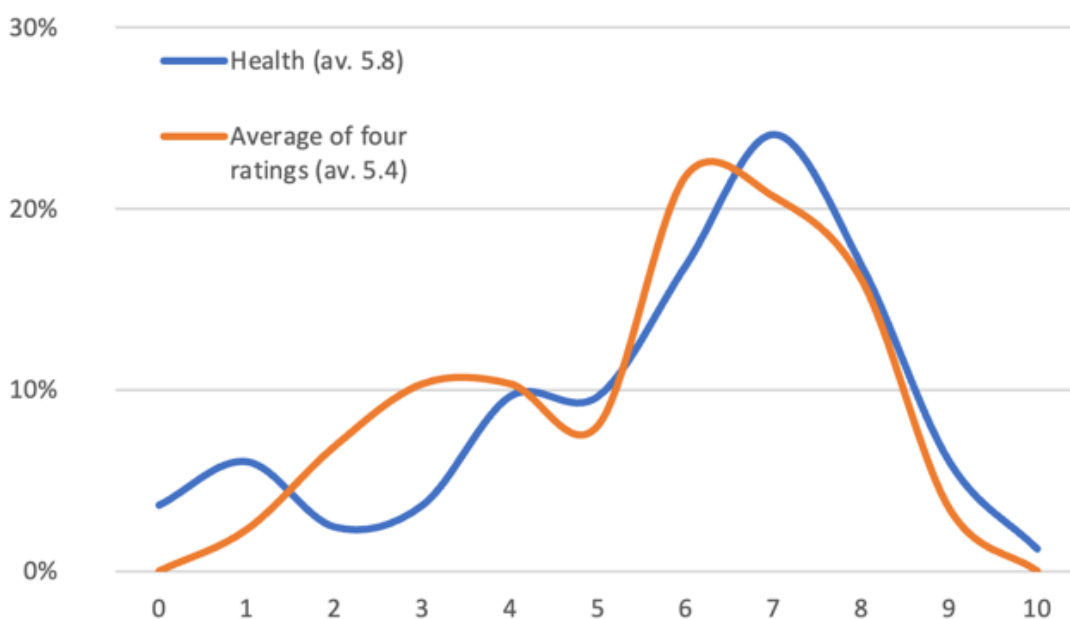
have seen a rebound in youth engagement after returning to in-person ministry (38%).

## Appendix 2: Other factors that influence vicars' assessment of youth ministry health

The four indicators of youth ministry health set a high bar for a local church youth ministry. When we were developing the framework in conversation with Diocesan youth ministers, we were conscious of the temptation to set the bar for health right about where our own ministries were operating. We intentionally set the bar high when describing the four factors as an encouragement for us all to 'excel still more', to borrow language from the Apostle Paul (1 Thessalonians 4:1). Rating our ministries among young people according to these four factors offers a benchmark from which we can grow and a framework that could direct our energies.

The average rating across four health indicators was 5.4. This was slightly below the average overall health rating (5.8).

### Average Ratings of Health Indicators versus Overall Health rating



#### We asked vicars:

*Do you think there is anything missing? Are there any other factors that you feel are important indicators of the health of your youth ministry, but that aren't in the framework we just worked through?*

Just over half (53%) of the vicars surveyed thought there were other factors that contribute to youth ministry health that were not included in the model. Our analysis concludes that all of these 'other' factors do in fact sit within the framework of our four indicators.



## Parents discipling their own children

The most frequently mentioned 'other' factors was the importance of parents in discipling their own children (raised by 10% of vicars). We would see this as an important element in planning for discipleship. If indicator 1 (Integration) is all about connecting young people with the rest of the church congregation, indicator 2 (Discipleship) must include connecting youth leaders with parents.

Equally though, effective discipleship of teenagers cannot be left to parents to do on their own. Equipping parents as part of an overall plan for discipleship must also be supported by training other non-parent adults (indicator 3) to be leaders and mentors who can help young people navigate the challenges of adolescence and contemporary culture.

## Factors that are part of indicator 1: whole church ownership

Additional factors mentioned by vicars that are part of seeing young people integrated into the whole church community include providing sufficient financial **investment**, resourcing, and facilities for effective youth ministry.

Young people having a **sense of belonging** and being **valued as members of the church** are core elements of integration.

## Factors that are part of indicator 2: discipleship

Many of the additional factors named were **specific strategies for discipleship** – music, worship, more engaging church services, rites of passage, 'fun', and appropriate discipleship of both male and female young people. Depending on specific contexts, these kinds of ideas may or may not be useful elements of discipleship strategy.

**Having a 'critical mass' of young people** is also something that we include under the heading of discipleship pathways. Creating a community of peers where young people feel a sense of belonging can be a very useful part of a plan for discipleship, but it is by no means essential. One-to-one mentoring (within the guidelines for child-safe ministry) and belonging to an intergenerational community can be just as effective strategies (and are arguably more so), and not only for parishes with only a handful of young people.

One factor that was specifically mentioned by vicars that we would encourage every parish to include within a discipleship plan is **giving young people agency in their own growth in faith**.

Planning for discipleship also presumes certain assumptions about what discipleship truly means and aims for. **What constitutes 'mature faith'?** Effective planning for discipleship must involve clarity about both the ends and the means of the life of faith in Jesus.

## Factors that are part of indicator 3: leadership

Factors mentioned by vicars that we include under the heading of 'having leaders who are equipped for their roles in discipling young people' include training in **child safe** ministry, **inclusivity**, **mental health**, and appropriate **cultural engagement**.

Providing youth (and children's) ministers with **appropriate pay and conditions** would certainly help to attract and retain those leaders who have the gifts and training for these roles.



## Appendix 3: The impact of youth ministry size on health, hope, and vision

Throughout this report, the number of young people consistently stands out as the largest predictor of self-rated health and hope. This Appendix presents that story all in one place.

### 35% of parishes have no young people (at the moment)<sup>20</sup>

62 of the 186 parishes interviewed reported having no young people at present. The majority of these only chose to complete the short survey. The following findings are from the 12 vicars who did the long survey, even though they have no young people involved in their parish at present.

- Unhealthy (3.6), mostly attributed to insufficient numbers (25%) and a lack of leaders (17%)
- Not very hopeful (4.7), although buoyed when they have strong children's ministry feeding in (42%) and plans for the future (25% priority in MAP/vision, 17% new leaders)
- Low on integration (3.4), mostly (and understandably) because there are no young people to integrate (33%)
- Low focus on a plan for discipleship (4.1). Most have no plan in place, though 25% have the desire to create one, and 17% have a plan in place for children's ministry
- More confident in having leaders equipped (5.6) than other indicators of health, largely as a result of recognising good inter-generational relations in the church (27%)
- Outreach focus is low (3.8) with 67% engaging in no outreach
- One in four (25%) have not found any useful training. Of those who mentioned specific training needs, the main demand was for basic training, intergenerational ministry and networks (17% each).

### 28% of parishes have a car-load of young people (1-5)

Having 1-5 young people is not enough for a traditional 'youth group' but is a lot more than nothing. A car-load of young people presents an opportunity for them to encourage each other and be well-integrated into the whole church community. Youth ministry can thrive even without a traditional 'youth group' when young people receive one-to-one mentoring and inter-generational discipleship.

- Health rating was well below average (4.3). Vicars were positive about intergenerational relationships, but struggled with a lack or loss of leaders (29%), lack of programs for youth (24%), and low numbers of young people (24%)
- Hope was also low (4.8). Those who were more hopeful attributed this to good children's ministry feeding in (33%), and the influence of new leaders (33%). None mentioned existing leaders or longevity of leaders as signs of hope. Parishes with a small number of young people place more hope than others in collaborations with other churches (10%). The main obstacles to greater hopefulness include insufficient leaders or leaders leaving (29%), and a

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<sup>20</sup> The percentages are based on the proportion of the 179 parishes who responded to the survey. Out of the 213 parishes in the Diocese, 29% reported having no young people, 24% 1-5, 18% 6-15, 7% 16-30, 6% 30+. There are a remaining 16% of parishes that we do not have data from.

lack of budgeting or vision for youth ministry (24%)

- Their rating of integration was close to overall average (5.9). Positive factors include having young people active in service (24%) and being prayed for (19%)
- Planning for discipleship of young people was low (4.1). Most had no plan in place, mostly due to not enough young people
- Leaders equipped is slightly below average (4.8). Despite having good intergenerational relationships (35%), parishes in this category are often hindered by having no dedicated youth leaders (25%)
- Outreach focus is very low (2.6). Three in five parishes in this category are doing no outreach, though 25% mentioned community connections from individual parishioners.
- Much more likely than others to underestimate the overall health of the youth ministry (net under-estimate 44%)
- Not many have found useful training options. They make most frequent mention of specific youth ministry topics, such as adolescent development, domestic and family violence (24%), equipping in mission and outreach (10%), and training that is specifically focussed on youth ministry models for small churches, particularly for those in the Anglo-Catholic tradition (14%)
- Parishes in this category are keen to see resources for youth ministry (31%) and were the most likely to call for combined activities for young people (25%). The third most frequently mentioned desire was to see more opportunities for training to raise up more youth ministry leaders, and to see more co-operation between parishes (18% each).

## 22% of parishes would need a Minivan to move their young people (6-15)

With 6-15 young people there are enough teenagers to form the genesis of a group. However, a group of this size may struggle with issues of 'critical mass'. At this size, each of the young people can still be known by name by adult congregation members. Young people can also develop peer relationships with other young people in the parish.

In some ways, parishes with 6-15 young people find themselves in an 'awkward middle'. Parishes in this category, more so than those with fewer and those with more young people, keenly feel the loss or lack of leadership (45%), insufficient numbers (27%), and the negative impact of COVID-19 (24%).

- Health was close to the overall average (5.7). Positive sentiment stemmed from their focus on discipleship (21%), and they were more likely than other group sizes to rate their health higher due to having an outreach focus (12%)
- Hope was close to the overall average (7.2), with most common responses noting priority in MAP or vision (33%), new leadership (36%), and existing leadership (27%). Obstacles to hope included leader dependency (30%) and lack of budgeting and vision (27%). This group mentioned lack of support from parents or lack of discipling of parents more frequently than others (21%)
- Integration was right on overall average (5.8). The leading positive factors were having young people active in service (48%) and consistent strategy, budget and leadership (30%). Parishes in this range made the fewest references to young people being prayed for (9%) and being known and welcomed (3%)
- Planning for discipleship was average (5.3), with plans either being developed (15%),

needing clearer articulation (15%), or clearly articulated (21%), and part of a whole parish plan for discipleship (15%)

- Leaders being well equipped was below the overall average (5.7). Parishes in this category were most likely to mention the benefit of having a dedicated staff member overseeing the youth ministry (30%), yet they also face the obstacle of not have enough leaders (18%)
- Outreach focus was average (5.1). In 27% of these parishes young people invite their friends, and 21% have connections with a local school. However, 36% have no outreach
- These parishes were largely accurate in estimating youth ministry health (64%), with a slight tendency to over-estimate (27%)
- One in four have not found effective training options (27%). The most frequently mentioned useful training is from Ridley (21%) and the Diocesan consultant and/or website (15%). These parishes made the most frequent requests for training that is accessible (to regional locations and through online delivery; 21%). They also noted their interest in networks of youth ministers'(21%), and of basic training in youth ministry essentials (30%)
- When asked what they wanted to see for youth ministry across the Diocese, vicars from parishes within this category highlighted the provision resources (33%), more training and people trained for youth ministry (28%), and a greater overall commitment to youth ministry (26%). Together with parishes with the same or larger number of young people, they make only infrequent request for combined activities for young people (8%)

## 8% of parishes need a bus (16-30)

Parishes with between 16 and 30 young people can build a substantial and sustainable youth community. The strength in offering peer-to-peer relationships may be offset by the challenge of keeping the young people connected with the other members of the congregation.

- Moderately healthy on average (6.9), mostly because of effective leadership (57%), strong family support and connection (36%), and engaged and growing youth (36%). Leading negative factors are a lack of outreach focus (29%) and lack or loss of leaders (29%)
- Hopeful (8.1), most frequently due to good children's ministry feeding in, and priority in MAP or vision (both 43%)
- Integration was positive (6.7), led by young people being active in service (43%) and consistent strategy, budget and leadership (29%). Parishes in this range made the most frequent mention of young people being prayed for (21%). However, this category also made most mention of factors inhibiting integration, including lack of active attendance from young people, lack of service by young people, and lack of involvement by young people in parish council (14% each)
- Planning for discipleship was moderately high (6.5). One in three (36%) had a clearly articulated plan, and 14% noted the shift in strategy from fun to discipleship
- Leaders being equipped was reasonably strong (7.5). These parishes mention having enough leaders (29%), while also recognising that their leaders need better equipping and training (36%)
- Outreach focus was the highest of all size categories (5.9) while still being only modest. While 50% of these parishes said their young people invite their friends, 21% have no outreach and 14% say that there is no culture of outreach among the youth group or the church overall

- Most likely of all size categories to be accurate in assessing overall health (86%). None of the parishes in this size category made an underestimate of overall health
- These parishes have mostly benefitted from training through Ridley (43%). Parishes in this category made most frequent mention of training in the basic essentials of youth ministry (36%) and of the value of training events (21%)
- When asked what they wanted to see for youth ministry across the Diocese, vicars from parishes in this category highlighted the provision of resources (29%) and an increased emphasis on discipleship (21%). None of the parishes in this category mention cooperation between parishes (compared to 18% of all other parishes surveyed).

## 7% of parishes need two buses (30+)

Having more than 30 young people creates the opportunity for a sustainable youth group. On the other hand, these ministries face the challenges of integrating the young people with the rest of the congregation, and of providing the volunteer leaders needed to ensure that individual young people still receive personal discipleship.

- Healthy (7.8), mostly because of effective leadership (46%), engaged and growing youth (38%), and a focus on discipleship (31%). Problems in the areas of leadership and discipleship focus were also the main factors leading to less health (both 31%)
- Hopeful (8.3), with frequent mention of good leadership (46%), priority in MAP or vision (38%), and good children's ministry feeding in (31%). The most frequently mentioned obstacles were staff and leader dependency, and lack of budgeting or vision (all 23%)
- Integration was positive (6.6), with a median of 8. The leading positive factor was young people being active in service (46%). The major obstacle to integration was having youth separated from the rest of the congregation (23%)
- Planning for discipleship was high (7.5), with 46% having a clearly articulated plan. The biggest obstacle to discipleship was not having enough leaders (23%)
- Leaders equipped is reasonably strong (7.1), although lower than parishes in the 16-30 youth size category. Parishes with 30+ young people most frequently note that their leaders are well equipped and trained for their roles (54%)
- Outreach focus is average (5.1). Most frequently mentioned by these parishes was a shift in focus of the youth ministry from fun and entertainment towards discipleship (38%). In 31% of these parishes young people are inviting their friends, and 23% have community connections via individual parishioners
- Largely accurate in assessing youth ministry health (62%), with a tendency toward overestimating (31%)
- Parishes in this size category have found useful training from external organisations (23%), Ridley (23%), and through mentoring and youth ministers' networks (15%). Parishes in this category made most frequent reference to specific topics for training not mentioned by other categories (Other, 25%) including deeper theological training, and focussed training for early career youth ministers
- Parishes in this category were the most likely to mention a desire for cooperation between parishes (23%) and networks of youth ministers (15%). Perhaps it is the larger youth ministries who are less threatened by potential 'losses' from cooperation, and who have the most youth ministry staff looking to network with others.