



Create & Cultivate

SPACE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

createandcultivate.ca

A Resource of the Canadian Baptist Youth Forum



Foreword:

The Canadian Baptist (CB) Youth Team, a representative voice of Canadian Baptists from across the country for over 20 years, has a mission to be a “leader in the family of Canadian Baptists, fostering relational unity, connection and shared mission across Canada while advocating for and making possible national and global synergies in the areas of youth and young adult ministry.” One of our key priorities was providing a national voice on ministry to the next generation that would equip our churches to effectively reach and disciple youth.

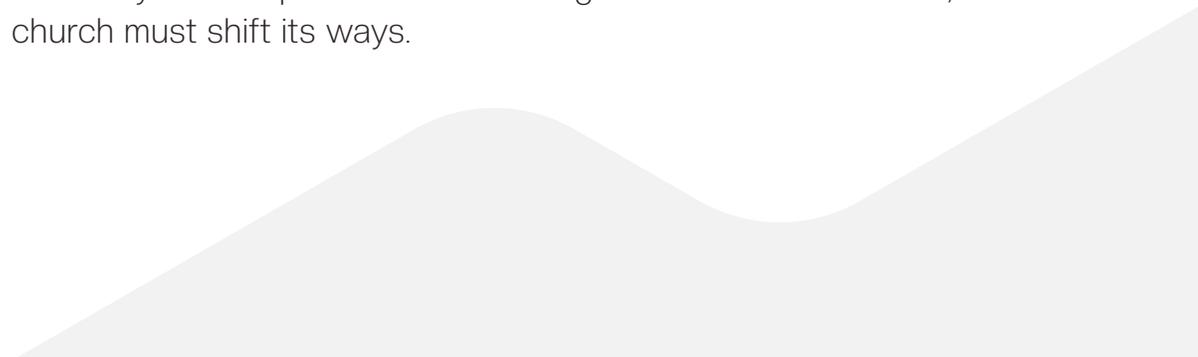
In 2016, a resource known as IMAGINATIVE HOPE was developed coming out of a national gathering of Canadian Baptist Youth Ministry Leaders to assist our churches in navigating the obstacles and opportunities that were before us in reaching and engaging the next generation.

Fast forward 8 years to October 2022, 50 influential Canadian Baptist leaders from across the country gathered again—representing the wide diversity of our churches to give voice to the challenges we are facing and changes we need if we are going to be able to grow up disciples that will influence their world for Jesus.

From the opening address by Don Simmonds to the insights shared by our keynote facilitators – Rev. Renée MacVicar, Dr. Anna Robbins, Dr. Tim Tang and Dr. Carson Pue – along with the honest and thoughtful discussion by the invited delegates in cluster groups came the cumulative voice to CREATE & CULTIVATE in 4 critical areas for the sake of engaging this next generation with the person and message of Jesus.

This CREATE & CULTIVATE manifesto is more than just a hope – it is a declaration to the Church that we need to act so that our young people grow in the ways of the Lord and embrace the mission of God as the Church.

We know that there are 8.2 million kids & youth in Canada who are overwhelmed with loneliness, abandonment, isolation and fear of judgment. This next generation is being shaped more and more through subversive strategic algorithms and screens, unaware of how they are the product that is being created. In this context, the church must shift its ways.



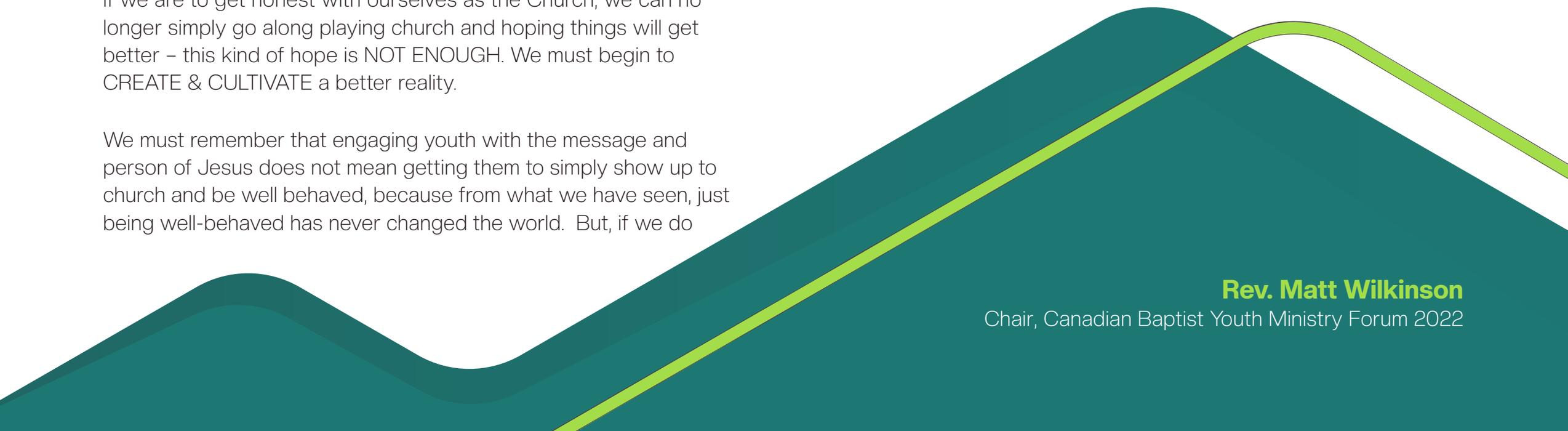
Instead of offering a packaged weekend production, a polished presentation, a protected and distant leadership driven by an agenda with determined outcome, we can be a people who must be AUTHENTIC – authentic in our love, in our personal lives, in the way we lead, and in how we build a faith community.

This AUTHENTICITY needs to permeate both who we are and what we do, while being intentionally HOLY SPIRIT-LED in the ways in which we will CREATE & CULTIVATE in 4 critical areas that could ultimately see millions of the next generation move one step closer to Jesus.

If we are to get honest with ourselves as the Church, we can no longer simply go along playing church and hoping things will get better – this kind of hope is NOT ENOUGH. We must begin to CREATE & CULTIVATE a better reality.

We must remember that engaging youth with the message and person of Jesus does not mean getting them to simply show up to church and be well behaved, because from what we have seen, just being well-behaved has never changed the world. But, if we do

whatever it takes to step out from our comfortable cultural norms and programs, and move this generation to experiencing transformative life change in the context of authentic mentoring relationships, in Spirit-led Christian communities – we will CREATE & CULTIVATE a generational shift in our churches.



Rev. Matt Wilkinson

Chair, Canadian Baptist Youth Ministry Forum 2022



We are youth workers from Canadian Baptist churches.

Our Niagara Falls forum became a space where we were challenged and emboldened. We love Christ, we care for the Church, and we are passionate to see young people encounter and follow Jesus.



We believe our hopes can become reality, because our hope is in Christ. As Canadian Baptists, we have a legacy of responding to our culture, raising up new leaders and new expressions of church, while continuing to invest in our youngest generations.

We believe that meeting as Canadian Baptists shapes our approach to ministry, and we hope to encourage a greater solidarity in our national family as we encourage more frequent collaboration.

We recognize that our church today faces many challenges—such as growing loneliness among our young people, declining numbers of pastoral leaders, and a need for effective approaches to evangelism.

We grieve, yet remain hopeful for what we believe the Lord is calling our churches across Canada to be in this time. We are looking back and looking ahead, and we believe that the time is NOW and God is calling us to **CREATE & CULTIVATE** without delay.

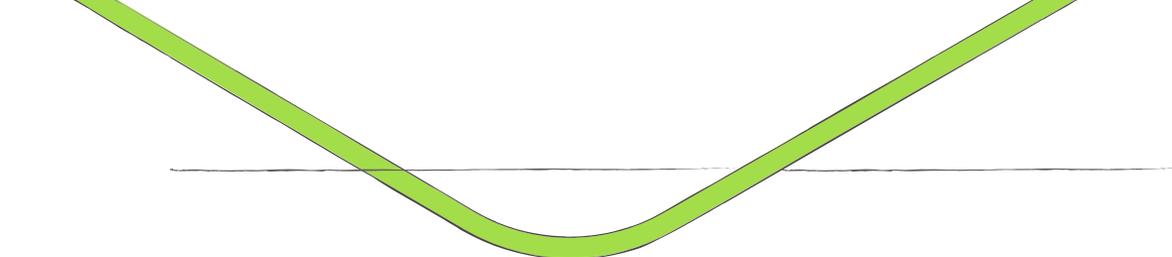


cre·ate

Verb: bring (something) into existence

cul·ti·vate

Verb: to promote or improve the growth of (a plant, crop, etc.) by labour and attention



We encountered solidarity in recognizing we are like gardeners; we are called to tend spaces for young people, where they can encounter Christ, commit to His church, and live out their lives in faith.

To see this happen, we are inviting our Canadian Baptist churches to create spaces where our young people will meet Christ and abide with Him. We are asking our churches to improve the growth of our young people by cultivating spaces where they experience authentic community.

We believe we need to CREATE & CULTIVATE the following four spaces:



Relentlessly Pursue Intergenerational and Cultural Unity



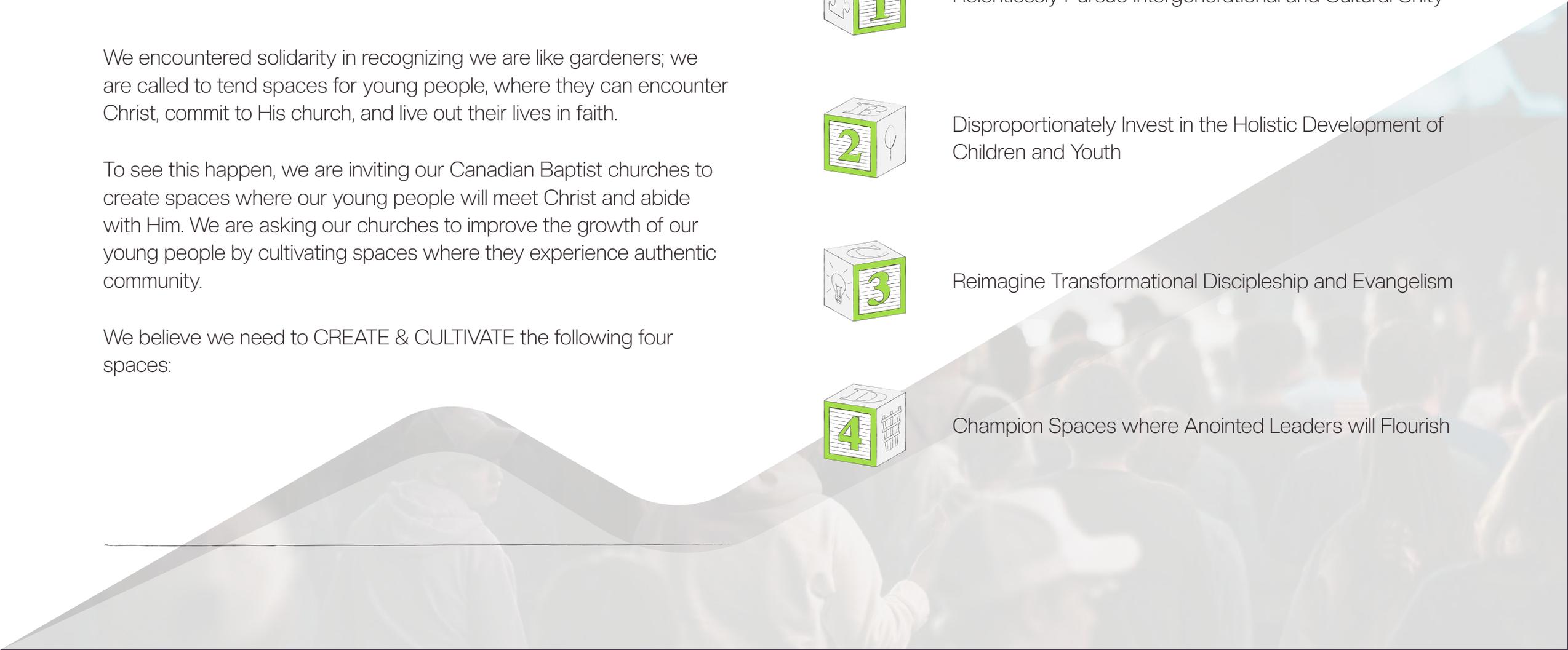
Disproportionately Invest in the Holistic Development of Children and Youth

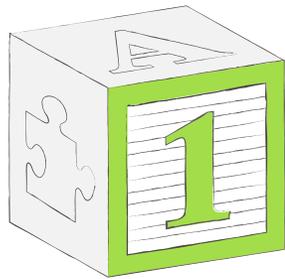


Reimagine Transformational Discipleship and Evangelism



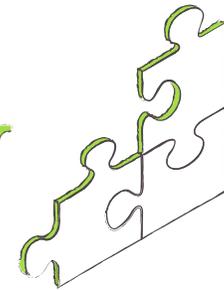
Champion Spaces where Anointed Leaders will Flourish





Relentlessly Pursue
Intergenerational & Cultural

Unity



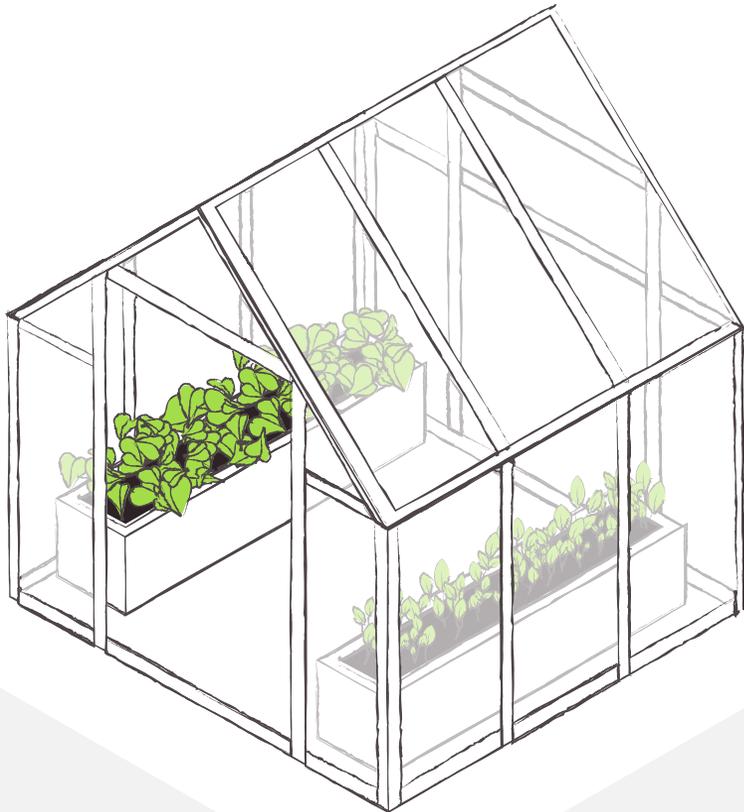
Sankofa is an Akan proverb that claims, *"It is not wrong to go back and get that which we have forgotten."* It is an invitation to look at the treasured knowledge of the past and recognize it as a seed of wisdom for the present.

"I am in them and you are in me, so that they may be made completely one, that the world may know you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me."

John 17:23

What we see:

We see in Scripture how conformity to Christ transcends social and cultural boundaries, so that in Jesus, we become one dwelling. We are called to set aside our own preferences and pursue paths that include all those who follow Jesus.



Our Call:

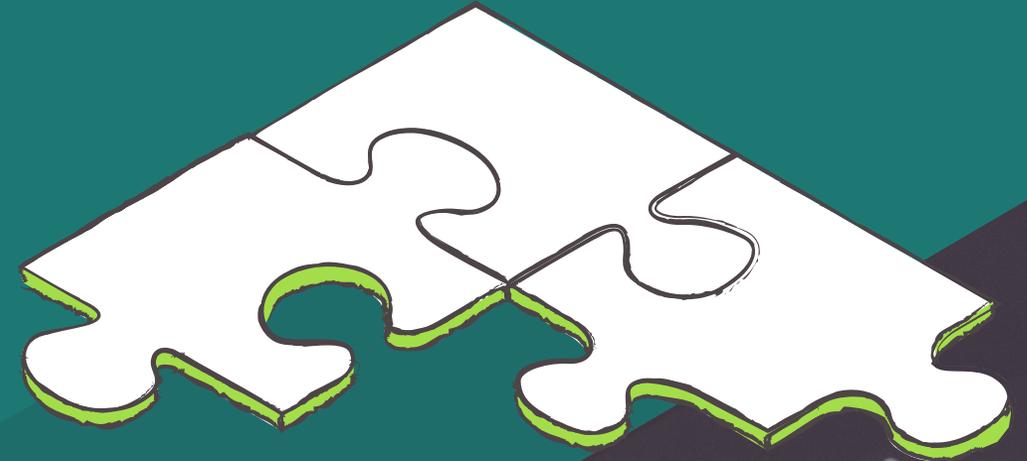
We call our churches to CREATE & CULTIVATE spaces where we can engage in healthy and constructive dialogue. As we recover “seeds of wisdom” from our past, we recognize that our Canadian Baptist ancestors sought unity amidst diversity, and faithfully wrestled with what it looked like to associate with one another, while holding differences in culture and practice.

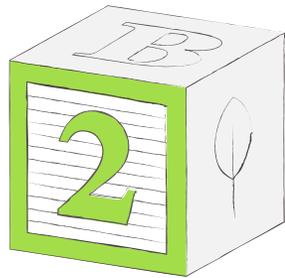
We celebrate the ethnic and cultural diversity in our neighbourhoods, and long to see that reflected in our churches. We hope to see our churches cultivate spaces that reflect the reality of those around them, so that our youth experience a church that looks like their neighbourhood; a church that feels like home.

We call our churches, even when there are points of division, to find ways to collaborate and uncover new ways to partner together. We call for an end to the silos of next-generation ministry, and we hope for unity across generational diversity. We grieve that our churches are missing parts of the body, and we join Jesus in praying for the Holy Spirit to make us one.

Calls to Action:

-  Pursue intergenerational approaches to ministry, bridging generational gaps, and helping our churches discover the necessity of meaningful adult-student friendships.
-  Give greater attention to creating ethnocultural inclusion in their approaches and representation in ministry .
-  Courageously wrestle with who we are as Canadian Baptists. We need to live in the tension of learning from our past, looking ahead to the future, while faithfully living in the present.
-  Find ways to collaborate with churches in your community that emphasize our unity in Christ over what divides us.





Disproportionately Invest
in the Holistic Development of

**Children
& Youth**



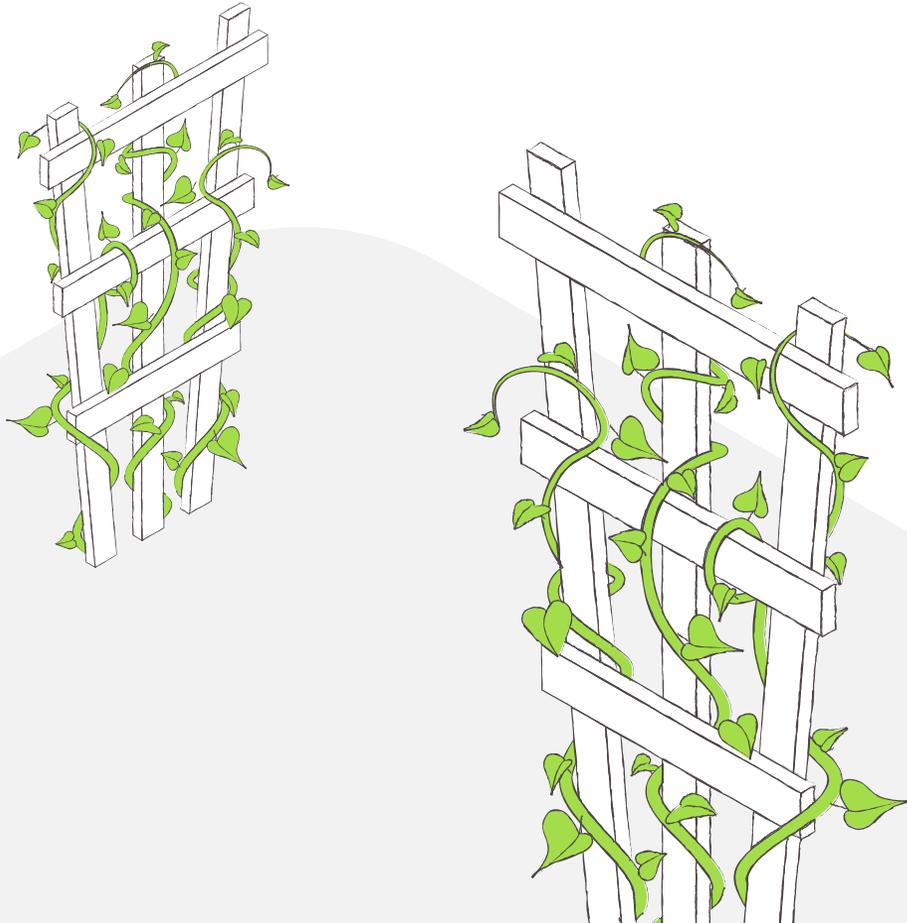
Soil conservation safeguards the soil against depletion and deterioration through management and land use techniques. For plants to flourish, attention must be given to the conditions of the soil. Just as industrialized agriculture can deteriorate the soil, so too can industrialized church deteriorate the faith formation of our young people.

But the man wanted to show that he knew what he was talking about. So he asked Jesus, "Who are my neighbors?"

Luke 10:29

What we see:

We believe that our young people are neighbours whom God is calling us to have compassion upon. As the Good Samaritan bandaged his neighbour and took care of him, so must we take care of our youth, who are experiencing high levels of loneliness, anxiety, and depression.

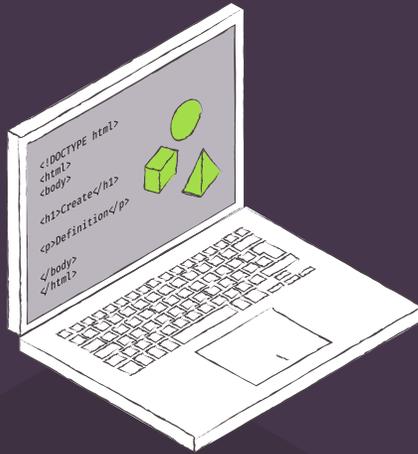


Our Call:

We call our churches to CREATE & CULTIVATE spaces for holistic development of the next generation, paying attention to their spiritual, mental, physical, emotional, and relational realities. For this to become a reality, we must affirm that the call to disciple our youth is actually the call for the entire church.

The Psalmist leads us all to tell the glorious deeds of the Lord to the coming generation [Psalm 78:4]. We must reject the silos of the modern church and believe that the faithful expression of today's church needs to find new pathways of bringing all generations together.

We call our churches to prioritize the families of our youth, to care for the well-being of everyone in the house. We recognize the struggles and tensions experienced by Canadian families, and remind our churches to come alongside parents. We encourage parents to step into their responsibility to lead their children toward Christ.

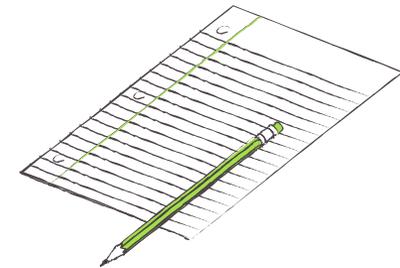


Calls to Action:

-  Identify and respond to the needs of young people in your community.
-  Establish youth and children as a significant priority through sufficient budget allotment.
-  Practice hospitality to young people by providing environments that give them a place where they know they belong and are valued.
-  Regularly communicate from all levels of church leadership that parents play a primary role in the spiritual development of children and make available resources they can access.



Reimagine Transformational Discipleship & Evangelism



As we follow the gardening metaphor through this report, we recognize that effective gardening is slow and requires one to take time to enjoy the process, rather than stressing out over outcomes and numbers.

"We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power, and the wonders He has done."

Psalm 78:4

What we see:

The Psalmist calls for the readers to consider the sharing of faith between multiple generations. The Psalm calls us to look back in our past, while considering the faith “growing conditions” of future generations.

Our Call:

We call our churches to CREATE & CULTIVATE new experiences and approaches that will shift current programming towards transformative discipleship and evangelism.

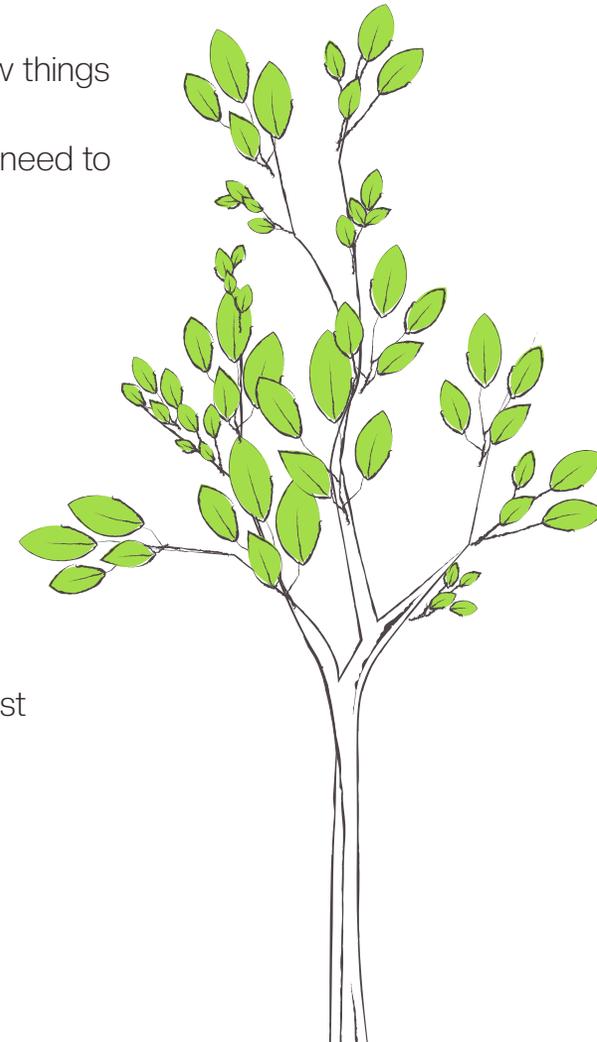
We hear the words of Jesus inviting all of us into a life of bearing fruit. We continue this work by inviting (evangelizing) others and teaching them to abide with Jesus (discipling). The Holy Spirit transforms us into new creations. We recognize that this transformation is gradual and requires life-on-life investment.

We also recognize that transformational discipleship and evangelism requires careful attention, and even pruning.

Our churches must consider what needs to be pruned from our current systems and re-evaluate what stands in the way of transformational discipleship and evangelism. We must be prepared to slow things down in our discipleship and evangelism processes. We have confused when we need to go fast and when we need to go slow.

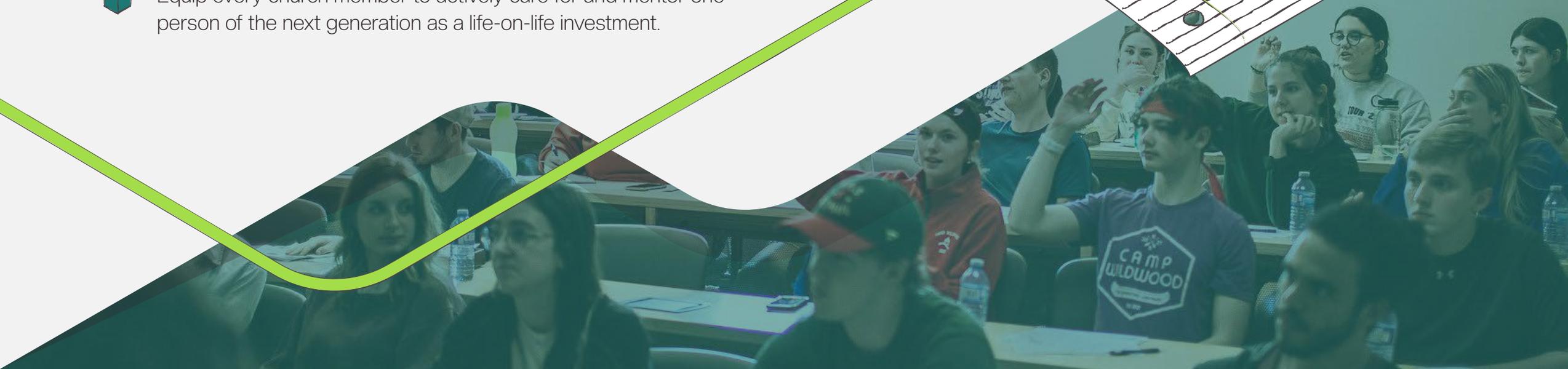
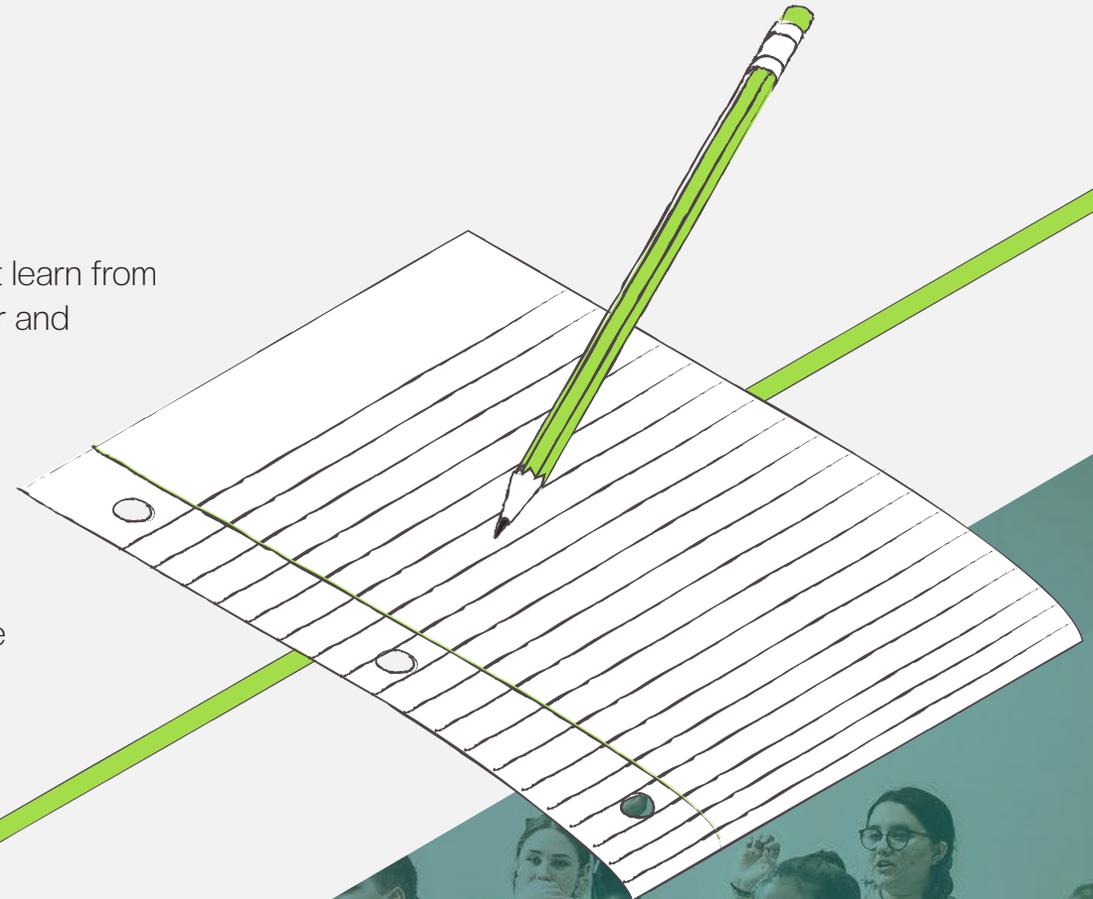
We have responded slowly to cultural changes, while attempting to accelerate the discipleship and evangelism processes which has missed meeting youth in their day-to-day challenges.

We must do better at integrating our youth into our local churches, so that their discipleship continues in the context of everyday experiences. We must listen better and respond quicker to the concerns affecting their faith journeys.



Calls to Action:

- ❏ Prioritize Restorative Justice in our evangelism and discipleship. We must learn from and work with our students in responding to systemic issues. Prepare for and respond to cultural issues of our day, willingly engaging in the questions that our young people are asking.
- ❏ Tell compelling stories about why it matters that we live out love and respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.
- ❏ Invite all generations to hear stories from one another about living out the love of Jesus.
- ❏ Equip every church member to actively care for and mentor one person of the next generation as a life-on-life investment.





Champion
Spaces
where

**Anointed
Leaders**

will
Flourish



Companion planting is the practice of growing different plants together for mutual benefit. It is not always based on hard scientific facts, but relies on observation and shared lore. It requires trial and error, not standardization.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

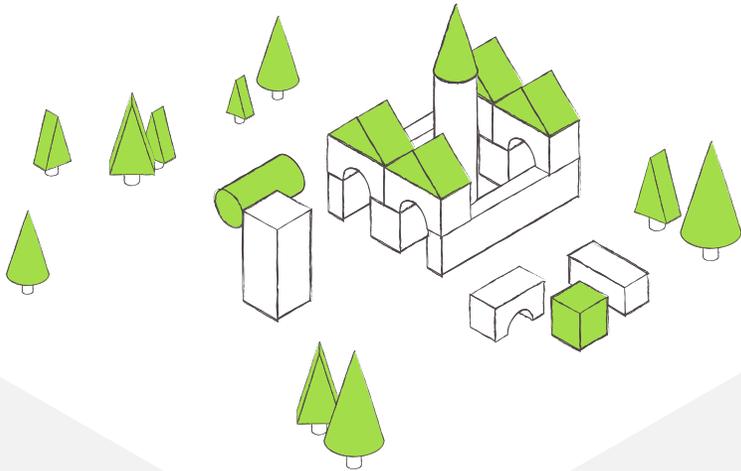
John 15:5

What we see:

Jesus invites us to abide in him, so that fruit will grow. The growth of fruit is not a quick process, but one that takes considerable time and investment.

Our Call:

We call our churches to CREATE & CULTIVATE spaces where healthy and anointed leadership of all ages is trusted, resourced, and flourishing.



We long to see churches open-handedly pursue partnerships in our neighbourhoods, demonstrating that the Kingdom of God extends beyond our churches. We hope for “companion planting” models of ministry, where multiple generations lead together and share wisdom and ingenuity.

We lament that many of our church systems and structures are hindering leadership and stifling hopes for the future. Our youth see the cumbersome bureaucracy, and they run from it and mistrust us. We have seen too many young people walk away from our churches as they follow Holy Spirit promptings and God-given dreams. We call for conditions in our churches that will make space for young leaders to be resourced by the church and flourish in their kingdom-building endeavors.

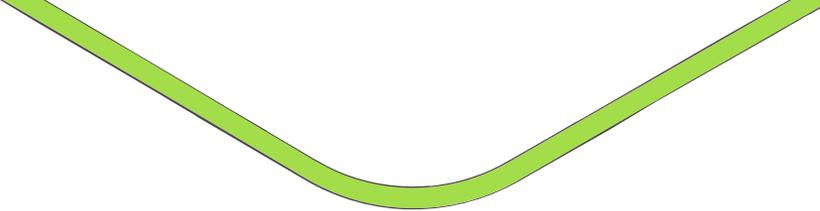
Furthermore, to develop healthy leaders, our churches must prioritize the soul care of all people, specifically leaders. We long for churches that pursue rest, restoration, and rejuvenation.

We believe that we can create spaces of healthy leadership and cultivate conditions where our young people are inspired to contribute to the church. This is not simply the work of our youth workers, but the task of every person in our churches.

Calls to Action:

-  Develop meaningful opportunities for apprenticing and coaching for young leaders.
-  Collaborate with other churches and organizations in our neighbourhoods to lead initiatives that would bless our communities.
-  Provide ongoing education and training on soul care and healthy culture for leaders in our churches.
-  Trust young people with meaningful leadership roles in your church while fully resourcing their kingdom-building dreams.





Conclusion:

Dear Beloved Church,

In 2016, we wrote you a letter inviting you to imagine a church that equips, empowers, engages culture, and focuses on youth and children while we saw the next generation leaving the church.

Now, we are in even more challenging times and we believe it's going to get more challenging for the Church, for you and your young people, before we see long term results – but this call to CREATE & CULTIVATE is that starting point.

Church, now more than ever, we need to stay in step with the Spirit in these changing days. We must stop putting up walls between us and stop fostering divisive voices. Instead, let's join together, lead with authentic love, and pursue the way of Jesus as we serve and reach the next generation in Canada.

Reaching and engaging the next generation starts with ONE. That we seek to be ONE CHURCH with ONE GOD all continually moving ONE STEP closer to Jesus. Let us equip and resource each and every person in the church to mentor ONE person of the younger generation resulting in transformative discipleship.

Let us ensure that we have at least ONE young leader on our boards, ONE young leader beginning to teach our congregation, and ONE young leader reaching out into their community and living out their faith to others.

It is our belief going forward that we, as Canadian Baptist youth ministry leaders, see a path for the Church stemming from our imaginative hope less than a decade ago. We believe that we can work together to CREATE & CULTIVATE churches where our youth and children will flourish in faith—in communities that are led by the Holy Spirit. We believe that we can work together to CREATE & CULTIVATE churches that grow amid our cultural moment, faithfully pointing to our Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that we can work together to CREATE & CULTIVATE churches, leaders and the next generation that will bring honour and glory to our Father.

Beloved Church, may we throw off all that hinders us and run with perseverance, remembering the cloud of witnesses that is cheering us on.





CBAC

Rev. Renée MacVicar

Executive Minister

"Create and Cultivate" is an important call to action for churches and leaders of all shapes, sizes, and ages. Our leaders on the front lines with our youngest generations are perceiving what is most needed to cultivate growth in God's Kingdom garden and to activate more gardeners! We need to pay attention and act now.

I love the action-oriented call in this report, to create and cultivate four spaces, with clear action steps every church and leader can take. To allow this Kingdom garden to flourish, it's up to each of us to create the space, invest in the tools and gardeners, cheer on and participate with all generations, and continue to nourish the growth. Read this report, discuss it with your circle of influence, and most importantly act on it in your church and community. Let's act together and see God's Kingdom flourish in all generations.



UÉBFC

Rev. Dr. Raphaël Anzenberger

Secrétaire Général

When I took the new role of Executive Director at the Union, youth leaders asked me: "what is your vision for the youth at the Union?" My first reaction was to resist the temptation of segmenting, fragmenting our Union among competing generations. The bottom line for each generation is leading people to Jesus, like Jesus and for Jesus. In other words, discipleship is the glue that holds generations together. I was very encouraged to read the "Create and Cultivate" call to action which furthers this idea. A great "feuille de route" for our Baptist denomination!





CBWC

Rev. Rob Ogilvie
Executive Minister

When youth workers from our national Baptist family gather together, I'm always inspired and challenged by how they speak into the church. I'm so thankful for their leadership! As I write this I'm about to turn 60 years old. I may not be done yet, but I have a responsibility to create space, cultivate growth, and cheer on our next generation of leaders. I would encourage my contemporaries to do the same!



CBM

Jennifer Lau
Executive Director

What a thrill to hear the collective voice of our frontline youth workers in Create & Cultivate. This uniquely Canadian Baptist resource speaks to the current realities for the church today as it seeks to bring hope to our world. It is my prayer that churches will continue to cultivate unity, holistic discipleship and leadership, as they reimagine what is possible for the next generation.



CBOQ

Rev. Leanne Friesen
Executive Minister

I often hear churches lament “we need to get more young people!” Often this concern is accompanied with statements such as “they need to start coming to church,” or “parents aren’t bringing their kids to church anymore.” This manifesto from “Create and Cultivate” gives the Church a clear call to action that also challenges us to take ownership of our role in creating spaces to effectively disciple the next generation. Presented with concern and passion by youth pastors from across the country, “Create and Cultivate” reminds us that it is not enough to simply hope for more youth engagement in our churches. Instead, if we say we want young people in our communities of faith, we must look at ourselves and changes we need to make to help this happen.

This is a clarion call for God's people to be extravagant and sacrificial in their investment in the next generation, and it is a message all churches need to hear. Read this report with your board, your parents, your seniors' groups, your deacons, your staff, and your whole church. Read it as you would a doctor's prescription – with care, concern, and the plan to make changes so that new life can come.

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Canadian Baptist Youth Team (2022 Forum Steering Committee):

Peter Anderson, Rici Be, Laura Bennett, Adrian Gardner, Louise Hannem, Alvin Lau, Dan Pyke, Matt Wilkinson

Participants:

Hannah Bartlett, Nate Bartlett, Maxine Bender, Dean Bender, Andrew Bennett, Dan Best, Andrew Bird, Cody Bolton, Natasha Davidson, Kendalyn Davis, Carlo De Vito, Jon Dixon, Sergio Espinoza, Jaysar Esteron, Cédric Ethéart, Hannah Fairbanks, Ethan Fidlay, Marco Gil, Adam Giles, Amy Gordon, Kylie Hurlburt, Tash Ingram, Hannah Juras, Rylan Kamerman, Erica Kenny, Tammy Klassen, Enoch Lau, Nikki Leftley, Micah Linkletter, Kimberly Loewen, Hannah Marriott, Ryan Marthinsen, Kyle Merkel, Jennifer Narcisse, Patrick Narris, Rebecca Neal, Christopher Neudorf, Devon Palmer, Phil Pharoah, Kristen Price, Tina Rae, Jeremy Ranasinghe, Matt Sampson, Josh Smith, Kyle Tabet, Carlee Turner, Kristian Ullman

Communicators:

Rev. Renée MacVicar, Dr. Carson Pue, Dr. Anna Robbins, Don Simmonds, Dr. Tim Tang

