



HELPING CHURCH LEADERS MAKE THE TRANSITION FROM THE PRESENT TO THE FUTURE

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## PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE: The Issues of Gen X Pastors

There is a lot of interest these days in Generation X on the part of advertisers, educators, the media and increasingly churches. In short, Gen X is hot. What are the issues of Generation X as seen through the hearts and minds of Gen X pastors? This spring, the Perkins School of Theology convened a five day consultation of 25 Gen X United Methodist pastors from across the nation. Their geographical differences were not as defining as their common generation concerns. The consultation focused on four issues:

### (1) What would churches have to know and do to minister with Generation X?

Some guiding principles would be leadership revisioning, worship as celebration, rediscovering discipleship, and Xers as agents of change. The first priority is no longer how can we help them know us and the gospel, but how can we know them in order to help them encounter the gospel. Ministry is not that which is done for Generation X but that which is done with or by Generation X. It will mean that in the church, pastors will have to let go of control.

### (2) What would pastors have to know and do to minister with Generation X?

Four areas would include authenticity, authority, community and context. Spiritual formation is a key issue in the education of pastors. It is also critical to encourage mentoring relationships. Xers are saying to pastoral leaders "love me", "show me", "guide me", and "work beside me."

### (3) What do Boards of Ordained Ministry need to know to work with Gen X candidates?

The purpose of the Boards is to provide effective spiritual leadership. This way of conceiving of the Boards' work is to move it from an administrative responsibility to a spiritual task requiring discernment more than simply testing candidates. The whole process must reflect this focus on relationships and the willingness to risk authentic encounters with one another.

### (4) What do theological schools need to do to work with and prepare Gen X for ministry?

Changes are needed in curriculum dealing with the purpose of the church, worship, evangelism, visionary leadership, world religions, social action, and apologetics. Focus on spiritual formation, be more willing to use pastors and adjunct faculty, and consider new delivery systems using technology and alternative models of teaching.

**For a copy of the complete report,  
A New Generation Prepares for the Challenges of the 21st Century,  
contact Stanley J. Menking, Perkins School of Theology, (214) 768-2264  
or e-mail [smenking@mail.smu.edu](mailto:smenking@mail.smu.edu). Single copies are \$10.00.**

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