

The Virginia and Gordon Palmer, Jr. Trust Grant Program
of the American Baptist Foundation
2012-2013 Grant Cycle

- Proposal -

YATMA Project – Young Adults Together in Ministry Action

Our goal is to begin a collaborative ministry using online education tools, social media networking and educational/ministry gatherings to start an ongoing ministry with the sole purpose of reaching 18-29 year olds. The basis of this ministry will be established to help churches understand what this age group deems important in our world and how it intersects and connects them to Christ's prophetic words of "take care of the least of these."

Proposal request from:

Philadelphia Baptist Association
Executive Minister – Rev. Dr. James E. McJunkin, Jr.

American Baptist Churches of New Jersey
Executive Minister – Rev. Dr. Lee Spitzer

American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware
Regional Executive Pastor - Rev. Dr. Frank Frischkorn



Section 1.0: Executive Summary

How is this project an expansion of an existing program or project?

In a collaborative effort the Philadelphia Baptist Association, American Baptist Churches of New Jersey and the American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware are seeking ways to continue reaching all people for the cause of Jesus Christ. Our three regions for decades have been working hard to raise the banner of Jesus Christ in and outside our churches serving people locally and around the world. Today, along with other denominations, we find ourselves at a new place trying to sustain a vibrant ministry to all ages in hopes of keeping all generations in our churches.

As we approach the grant directive put before us in reaching 18-29 years olds, we see great opportunity for increased ministry in reaching a generation of young adults who seem to be dwindling from our churches pews. We all realize the task before is monumental but believe it is not impossible. We believe through prayer and strategic missional planning we will see the hand of God do wonders in bringing back and reaching new young adults for Jesus Christ.

What is the project intended to accomplish and how?

Our greatest desire is to bring a diverse group of people together to connect and share common ministry values to better serve, rebuild and retain 18-29 year olds in the local church. The YATMA project is in the initial stages of developing a comprehensive plan for a central ministry gathering and for online gatherings to bring together 18-29 year olds along with other adults who desire to serve this age group.

What outcomes do you expect to achieve?

Our regions combined, represent over 700 congregations. We believe the possibilities of impact can be far reaching. We hope to see:

- A growing desire by our congregations to reach 18-29 year olds.
- A movement by churches to combine young adults' desire for service with connecting points to faith experiences.
- More young adults attending church and/or in ministry service opportunities.
- More utilization of online tools by our congregations for ministry purposes.
- A mentorship program developed where 18-29 year olds serve a younger generation and/or generations above are mentoring 18-29 year olds.

How will the impact/success of the project be evaluated and measured?

Measuring the success of the YATMA project will require establishing a network of ministry leaders as area consultants. These consultants will begin by reaching congregations with the vision of the YATMA project through personal visits or online connections for the purpose of sharing and collecting data for further evaluation. Through the area consultant's interactions and reporting we will be able to track with some accuracy the impact. Together we will create the following measurable ministry opportunities:

- Equip pastors and leaders in understanding the 18-29 year old culture.
- Create and implement curriculum suitable to help in reaching 18-29 year olds.
- Host gatherings of 18-29 year olds with other adults for nurturing and equipping.
- Engage people in ministry/service opportunities primarily created by 18-29 year olds.

Section 2.0: Organizational mission/vision

All of our regional ministries have varied mission, vision and values. However, there is a strong belief that we need to develop healthy partnerships with churches and the local pastors. We also seek to partner with our wider ABC family to fulfill Christ’s Mission across the globe. Each region has different ways in going about fulfilling their call and each of our regions are uniquely blessed with wonderful capable staff.

The Philadelphia Baptist Association started in 1707 with five churches to begin a partnership of support and service together and they continue today with 123 congregations. American Baptist Churches of New Jersey and American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware were organized in the late 1700’s. Each of these regions continues to grow with 283 (ABCNJ) and 322 (ABCOPAD) congregations.

Section 3.0: Project Goal/target population

There are many challenges facing our churches today. One of the greatest is the lack of ministry efforts in reaching and keeping young adults. Many researchers have labeled this group the “forgotten group”, as the group that is most misunderstood. There is a real and growing disconnect in our churches on how to reach young adults 18-29. What is desperately needed is an intentional response of ministry efforts to this age group that involves care and compassion from all generations working together to reach across all diversities with the hope of Christ.

We conducted some of our own research and reached out to over 100 young adults on social media sites. Of the 100, 51 agreed to participate in a survey. Below are four questions with corresponding results. The first and last questions ask for positive responses, while questions two and three are seeking negative responses.

Illustration A

What did you find most meaningful in a church you have attended? Pick the top three please!		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Fellowship/Relationships	78.4%	40
Worship Service - Structure	13.7%	7
Worship Service - Music	54.9%	28
Pastor’s Message	56.9%	29
Activities offered	15.7%	8
Older Adult Mentor	19.6%	10
Children’s Ministry	3.9%	2
Youth/Teen Ministry	45.1%	23
Adult Sunday School/Teaching	2.0%	1
Other (please specify)	11.8%	6
	answered question	51
	skipped question	0

** Notable results in answers to the first question – Fellowship/Relationships was overwhelmingly #1 and Worship Music and Pastor’s Message were a strong #2. Youth/Teen Ministry was #3. The most noticeable and a not surprising outlier here is the need for Strong Relationships. The high response for the pastor’s message and worship music does show strong support for “quality” and “authenticity” in our churches.*

Illustration B

What have you found to be the most frustrating in a church you have attended? Pick the top three please!		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Lack of Fellowship/Relationships	43.1%	22
Worship Service - Structure	19.6%	10
Worship Service - Music	25.5%	13
Pastor's Message	37.3%	19
Activities offered	17.6%	9
Lack of Adult Role Models	35.3%	18
Children's Ministry	7.8%	4
Youth/Teen Ministry	19.6%	10
Adult Sunday School/Teaching	25.5%	13
Other (please specify)	23.5%	12
answered question		51
skipped question		0

**Not surprising was the need for strong relationships. However, it is interesting to note that when the word mentor is changed to Role Models we see a shift revealing the need for more Adult Role Models.*

Illustration C

I have or I know of someone who has stopped going to church on a regular basis because - (select your top three reasons)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Church is not relevant to my needs	34.7%	17
Church has been boring for me	42.9%	21
The Bible is not taught clearly enough	18.4%	9
I do not sense anything special about being at Church	34.7%	17
I feel Christianity is anti-science with no room for debate on evolution	26.5%	13
The teachings on birth-control and sexuality are out of date	16.3%	8
The church has judged me for questioning my faith	36.7%	18
The church is too exclusive and is not open to new ideas and tolerance of other religions or beliefs	44.9%	22
Other (please specify)	20.4%	10
answered question		49
skipped question		2

** Statistically there is no clear outlier present in the above data. However, it is worth noting that three of the five higher responses are directly connected to a "personal" connection to church attendance. Also, two of the five higher responses are connected to feeling "judged" for questioning faith or feelings of "intolerance."*

Illustration D

What would you find most appealing to help you attend church on a regular basis?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Authentic Relationships	72.5%	37
Straight Forward Relevant to my life messages	37.3%	19
Opportunities to serve others on a regular basis	23.5%	12
People who are not judgmental to my beliefs	19.6%	10
Concern for the poor and oppressed	21.6%	11
Diversity	21.6%	11
Nothing will help	2.0%	1
Other (please specify)	7.8%	4
answered question		51
skipped question		0

** Again and not surprising was the concern for Authentic Relationships by this group. The need for "relevant messages" is important to this age group as it also concerns them with wanting more opportunities for open discussions about real life issues. (illustration C)*

In response to answers such as these, the three regions are continuing to seek ways to reach teens and young adults. As part of our mission and focus we feel called to serve our local churches through equipping people to reach in and outside the church community. We continue to create partnerships with our local churches to engage them in thinking up new ways to reach teens and young adults. For example - ABC of PA & DE has purposefully created online teaching programs to help lay leaders grow and equip themselves in the area of youth ministry and beyond.

Our goal is to begin a collaborative ministry using online education tools, social media networking and educational/ministry gatherings to start an ongoing ministry with the sole purpose of reaching 18-29 year olds. The basis of this ministry will be established to help churches understand what this age group deems important in our world and how it intersects and connects them to Christ's prophetic words of "take care of the least of these." The training aspect of this ministry will provide focus on how to connect and partner with this age group through discipleship and modeling prophetic justice through engaging in experiential learning as we see it lived out in the Holy Scriptures. This will also provide a missional focus, which connects with the greater American Baptist Churches mission as we reach into our neighborhoods and communities to bring the love of Christ.

Section 4.0: Resources

One of the exciting parts of our tri-regional proposal is we the diversity of our regions. We bring a strong identity as a collaborative regional staff that is racially, ethnically and culturally diverse. Together we have a greater reach, which will hopefully bring a larger impact.

ABC of PA & DE has the benefit of having a strong connection to Eastern University's Youth Ministry program. The Rev. Eric Kraihanzel who serves on the ABCOPAD regional staff as the Regional Youth Pastor also serves as the Youth Ministry Leadership Program Director at Eastern University. The Youth Ministry Leadership program is facilitated completely on-line through distant learning as part of the Campolo College of Graduate and Professional Studies at Eastern University. Rev. Eric's connection to the university will bring a wealth of resources as we strive to fulfill the goal and ministry plan put forth in this grant proposal.

We have also reached out to other Christian Universities in hopes of opening a dialogue to qualify and quantify continued research. We also hope to build new ministry bridges for resourcing and developing new ideas. More importantly, we hope to increase ministry capacity of our leadership in our regions through growing a knowledge base to help with experiential learning labs online.

As part of the YATMA project we will need to seek out and hire a ministry coordinator. We would want to hire someone who is in the age range of 21-25. This person would keep a pulse on the ministry needs, help with research and training and be the contact person for ongoing ministry connections and collaboration. They would serve as the CORE group coordinator and advisor and they would also be in direct contact with regional staff serving to help this project flourish.

Lastly, as we seek resources we will also look to our congregations that have been successfully reaching young adults and learn from them from their experiences. We want to make sure we include and learn from those who are trying and striving to connect with this tough demographic. We want to know how they have been successful and where they feel they have missed the mark.

Section 5.0: Study and Reflection

Study – Discernment Process –

American Baptist Churches of PA and DE has had a strong focus on serving our churches Youth Ministry programs for the past 10 years. ABCOPAD has been discussing possible ministry ventures in reaching young adults for the past two years. We have floated possible options for resourcing churches to having conferences. When the grant was announced for reaching the young adult population we decided it was time to move into high gear. Immediately the three regions put their heads together and said we need to get behind a new vision for ministry to reach 18-29 year olds. We decided to work together not only because of our close proximity, but also the rich diversity which would bring added value to our experience and learning.

Reflection – Review and Reshape -

The review methods will vary but will include phone conversations, online meetings, personal visits and consultant gatherings. As noted earlier in the proposal we will need to establish area consultants. These consultants will be brought together for learning, equipping and sharing. As they share and collaborate on ideas together, they will enter into deeper discussions, which we believe will have a tremendous impact on the way they serve and lead in helping others see the need for reaching young adults. Our hope is to process with them and to hear from them their shared experiences and what they feel are the practical implications and theological implications for the ministry. From hearing their insights we will be able to discern if we are hitting our target goals or if there needs to be course correction.

As we begin the journey we will ask all consultants to read and review “You Lost Me” Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church...and Rethinking Faith by David Kinnaman. We will also seek to provide curriculum such as Judson Press’s Good Ground Bible Studies for Young Adults and there will be other readings and scripture to help in this ongoing adventure. There are plans to provide access to podcasts or videos and guests lecturers to help enhance their understanding and to enhance their ability to have a greater reach.

Section 6.0: Activities/Output –

In our development of ministry gatherings and online collaboration we are looking to implement discipleship/growth opportunities for 18-29 year olds through a strategic plan. We think the ministry possibilities and networking are limitless and feel with the right connections with the target group and older adults there can be great results. As stated earlier, *Our greatest desire is an effort to bring a diverse group of people together to connect and share common ministry values to better serve, rebuild and retain 18-29 year olds in the local church.*

The online training events before and after our educational/ministry gathering will allow people from all ages, interested in serving 18-29 year olds, to engage in training and the sharing of ministry ideas. We envision the online gatherings as an ongoing discipleship adventure as we can see how this ministry will be very fluid and expanding. The gatherings, whether at a central location or online, will serve to bring awareness, training and most importantly to spawn future hands-on ministry efforts.

This ministry endeavor will include:

1. **August 2013** - Pre-planning with 18-29 year olds along with other adults to make sure we hear from all those we serve and those who serve. This will

include a diverse group of people across generations, genders and ethnicity making up our CORE planning team.

- The Pre-planning will allow for a strategic launch of this ministry and will help it give birth to deliberate approach in reaching our target group.

2. **Fall-Winter 2013-14** - Pre-planning with Area Consultants for training and sharing of ideas through online learning. This will be done through online meetings, podcasts or simulcasts of running educational/ministry events.
- This will assure we are implementing the plan correctly and through training we will be able to replicate and increase the capacity of leaders, which will lead to greater results.
3. **Winter 2014** - Pre-Planning in Demographic areas with local ministry leaders. Area Consultants will engage in pre-planning of ministry gatherings and online collaboration. The pre-planning will include training and sharing of ideas. Networking with regional ministries will become a priority as we seek to serve our target group together. Discussion on church structure and programs will be discussed.
- Again we see the ability to replicate and increase the capacity of leaders. At this point we see potential movement to generate new patterns and ideas for discipleship.
4. **Spring 2014** - Gatherings of our defined age group along with other adults for education and inspiration in ministering to 18-29 year olds. This will include real-time learning experiences shared in community serving projects and online opportunities for meeting collaboration.
- This is where the rubber hits the road. As we have strived to develop a strategic discipleship model we will seek to deploy people to be Jesus in their communities. Through the modeling of area consultants training others we hope to see and hear stories of 18-29 years olds being touched by the love of Jesus Christ.
5. **Spring 2014** - Post-gatherings for training and sharing of ideas through online learning similar to the pre-gatherings, but this time the focus will be on hearing from Area Consultants. We will review and discuss next steps for planning for continued ministry to the defined target group. We will work towards finding new Area Consultants to help in this ministry endeavor.
- Debriefing will be needed; as we are sure by this point we will have much to review and to discuss.

Section 7.0: Outcomes/Evaluation –

In the Executive Summary we indicated what we hoped to see as outcomes. They are explained in more detail below:

- **A growing desire by our congregations to reach 18-29 year olds.** We sense that too many of our congregations do not see making intentional efforts in reaching this target group as a priority. They wonder where all of the 18-29 years olds have gone but yet they have limited to no plans for ministry growth in this area.

- *We believe this outcome will be easy to measure as we see reports from Area Consultants and hear stories from congregations.*
- **A movement by churches to combine young adults' desire for service with connecting points to faith experiences.** Our target group is known for wanting to participate in something that brings meaning, has an impact and is tangible. The goal here is to provide connecting points for faith and service to hopefully point them to reconnecting to the ministry of the church.
 - *We believe this outcome will be able to be measured not only on the basis of participation but also through feedback and through recurring service.*
- **More young adults attending church and/or in ministry service opportunities.** Ultimately the goal of this grant is to see young people re-enter and re-establish themselves in the life of the church. We pray for their hearts and minds to be moved by connecting faith experiences with churches.
 - *This outcome is measurable by way of attendance. However, it needs to be noted here that attendance does not necessarily mean commitment and connection. As part of our evaluation process we will have to find ways to measure attendance and commitment.*
- **More utilization of online tools by our congregations for ministry purposes.** As the young adult population grows so will the need for methods of reaching this group. The majority of children today in the US do not know what it is like to not have a computer or a smartphone in their home. We see the need for our congregations to not only create websites but to develop online learning tools and the utilization of social media networking.
 - *Again this is a measurable outcome as we will be able to see and track what congregations or organizations are implementing as a web presence.*
- **A mentorship program developed where 18-29 year olds serve a younger generation and/or generations above are mentoring 18-29 year olds.** It was clear from our survey that there was a need for adult role models to play an important part in the life and faith development of younger people. Statistics show over and over again that adult mentors make a huge impact on young people's lives. We hope to begin a process for mentoring that will establish curriculum and goals for all involved.
 - *We will measure the mentorship program through tracking participation and online surveys.*

As the YATMA project grows and expands it will be necessary to have continuous evaluation. First through our Area Consultants we will be able to track progress as they connect with ministry leaders in their communities. Through an established network we will be able to create avenues for the reporting and tracking of information. This tracking of information will allow us to decipher and evaluate the effectiveness of the ministry. We will also continue to reach out to our target audience on a regular basis for gathering of research, which will include current trends, religious views, personal needs, etc...

Section 8.0: Impact -

We believe the possibilities of impact can be far reaching. We represent three ABC regions made up of 700+ churches. Imagine if just 10% of our churches were to connect and be intentional in this equipping experience. What if these churches were to provide 18-29 year olds authentic fellowship connections, mentoring/modeling and a place for open discussion of relevant issues? This reach to congregations alone would make a fantastic impact!

Through our collaborative efforts we desire to see more than 10% of our churches involved and the three regions together want to support all of our congregations in reaching this amazing target group. We are ready to work together in ministry and to support this endeavor financially. As revealed in Section 6, we have established a timeline to begin working immediately in 2013 to launch this ministry project.

At the very core of this age group there tends to be a need to be hands on in service. The young people we come in contact with have a real passion for understanding local and global justice issues. As we convene their brilliant minds and connect them to mission we believe the impact can be endless for the local and global church of Jesus Christ. Through making the connecting points of faith and service we hope to see young people filter back into the church body with a desire to increase ministry service in and outside the church walls. We envision this ministry being a model for other ministries in how they approach reaching a specific age group.

Section 9.0: Sustainability -

As each region enters into this collaborative ministry we understand there will be costs beyond the grant period. The YATMA project's growth will depend on building a network of leaders for continued future ministry. We see an ongoing ministry of Area Consultants reaching and teaching congregational leaders in new ways of reaching 18-29 year olds. There will be movement to continue pre-training, ministry gatherings and post-training opportunities to keep the ministry on a growing edge. It is quite possible, as this ministry grows, there will be a need for a full time staff person serving all three regions as a Pastor for Young Adult Ministries.

Section 10.0: Budget –

The YATMA Project budget was built around the understanding that all three regions have continuing ministries to reach all ages, but this budget is specific in its efforts to help enhance the ministry to 18-29 year olds. Each region will see the benefit of this partnering ministry as it grows and builds a network of leaders. The budget for 2013-2014 is \$28,000.00 and 70% of the budget is for direct ministry with people for training and support. The remainder 30% of the budget is set for administrative work for coordination, research gathering and office needs. As part of the administrative work, we would seek to hire a ministry coordinator in their mid-20's. See attached budget.

Section 11.0: Appendices

See Attachments

**YATMA Ministry Project Budget
2013-2014**

INCOME/FUNDING

Regional Support (x3)	\$9,000.00
VGPTABF Grant	\$15,000.00
ABCOPAD Legacy Grants	\$3,000.00
Gathering Love Offerings	\$1,000.00
Total Income/Funding	\$28,000.00

EXPENSES/MINISTRY COSTS

Ministry Costs

Core Group

Travel	\$2,000.00
Accomodations	\$1,500.00
Training/Materials	\$1,200.00
Food	\$1,200.00

Area Consultants

Travel	\$2,400.00
Accomodations	\$2,000.00
Training/Materials	\$2,000.00
Food	\$2,000.00

Ministry Gatherings

Training/Materials	\$2,000.00
Food	\$2,000.00
Equipment Rental	\$1,000.00

Administrative Costs

Coordinator	\$5,000.00
Office Supplies	\$1,000.00
Promotion/Web Presence	
Web Presence	\$500.00
Surveys	\$300.00
Online Meetings	\$300.00
Technology Equipment	
Computer	\$1,000.00
Projector	\$600.00

Total Ministry Costs	\$28,000.00
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