

10 Ways to Make Your Parish More Youth-Friendly

A guide for parish leaders in the Diocese of Sandhurst

Why This Matters

Young people aged 16–35 are seeking connection, authenticity, and purpose. They want to be known, valued, and invited into a Church that feels like home. These are simple, actionable steps to help your parish become more welcoming and engaging for young people.

10 **Action Steps**

1. **Personally Invite Young People**

Don't wait for them to show up—reach out. A personal invitation to a parish event, ministry, or conversation makes all the difference.

2. **Celebrate Milestones**

Acknowledge birthdays, graduations, achievements, and transitions. Celebrate their lives and let them know they matter.

3. **Create Intergenerational Mentorship**

Pair older parishioners with young people for spiritual companionship. Relationships—not programs—form disciples.

4. **Offer Informal Gatherings**

Create relaxed spaces for conversation, food, and fellowship. Think: coffee catch-ups, pizza nights, or walk-and-talks.

5. 📱 **Use Social Media to Connect**

Meet young people where they are. Share parish life, events, and reflections on platforms they use—authentically and consistently.

6. 🧑 **Empower Youth to Lead**

Invite them to serve in liturgy, music, hospitality, tech, and outreach. Let them shape the Church they belong to.

7. 🗣️ **Ask for Input—and Act on It**

Create listening spaces. Ask what they need, what they dream of, and what's missing. Then follow through.

8. 🏠 **Be Visibly Welcoming**

From signage to smiles, make sure your parish says “you belong here.” Hospitality teams should include youth voices.

9. ❓ **Provide Safe Spaces for Questions**

Faith grows through curiosity. Offer forums, small groups, or one-on-one conversations where doubts are welcomed.

10. 🙏 **Pray for Them by Name**

Lift young people up in prayer—publicly and privately. Let them know they're spiritually supported and deeply loved.

“Young people don't leave the Church because they stop believing in God. They leave because they don't feel known.” — Everett Fritz

Let's build a Church where every young person is seen, heard, and called into missionary discipleship

What we, the young, see in a Church/parish that is a Community of Belonging for youth.

Initial and Ongoing Acceptance – We see everyone being accepted regardless of looks, gender, race, ethnic background, age, accomplishments, wealth, status, sexuality, lifestyle choices, etc. We accept people as they are and acknowledge that where people are is not necessarily where Jesus wants them to stay – that applies to everyone. We see the Church modelling a spiritual journey that is honest and vulnerable, seeing struggle and failure as part of growth; it is accepted that each person's spiritual journey has many seasons with ups, downs and in-betweens. We see Church as a place for speaking, listening and learning, where there is an openness to learning from one another and journeying together in faith.

Intimacy and Larger Community – We see each person growing through the experience of both larger community gatherings and small groups. We see a Church growing in larger settings such as attendance at Mass, socials and celebrations, and in smaller mid-week settings with Church members in small groups for strengthening relationships, growing in faith, living the Christian life, service and reaching out to others. Both larger gatherings and small groups have an important role to play, and are organised to work well together.

Home-Like Feeling – We see that everyone feels at home in this Church, that it is a place where they belong and are valued; no matter how big the Church community gets, people still feel at home.

Relational – We see a Church where everyone is known by name and journeying with each person to grow spiritually through relationships. The focus is on people and not buildings.

Involvement – We see everyone not just attending Church but involved through their expression of gifts. We see everyone participating rather than spectating. Each person is positively encouraged and challenged to respond to Jesus in their lives; people are sought out and personally invited to use their gifts in different ministries; everything does not depend on one or two people.

Spiritual Growth/Journey – We see a Church that meets each person where they are at and invites each into deeper relationship with Jesus, journeying with them on that path. It is not expected that everyone's faith will look the same. There are resources and strategies, including online, to provide people with ways to grow and live their faith.

In this spiritual growth journey there is fellowship; there are youth groups; there are conferences and festivals; there is music; there is sharing over food; there are social justice projects and good causes. There is prayer, both engaging with Jesus and the Holy Spirit in gathering for Mass and in smaller group prayer and personal prayer through the week. We see people so deeply impacted that they invite others into the journey.

Growth – We see a Church more focussed on the spiritual health of people than just numbers attending, relying on God to lead and to give the growth. The numbers are coming.

Celebration of Mass – We see Mass as a lively celebration with our Church family, with a relatable, succinct and challenging message in the homily, a vibrant music ministry, and a real welcome and hospitality ministry. The priest connects with all who gather, especially young people who feel very welcome. Many people have different roles in the gathering and celebration. The celebrations are a life-giving combination of relational and reverent, sacredness and fun. Mass is a celebration where people joyfully and willingly engage.



Building a Community of Belonging for Young People

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