

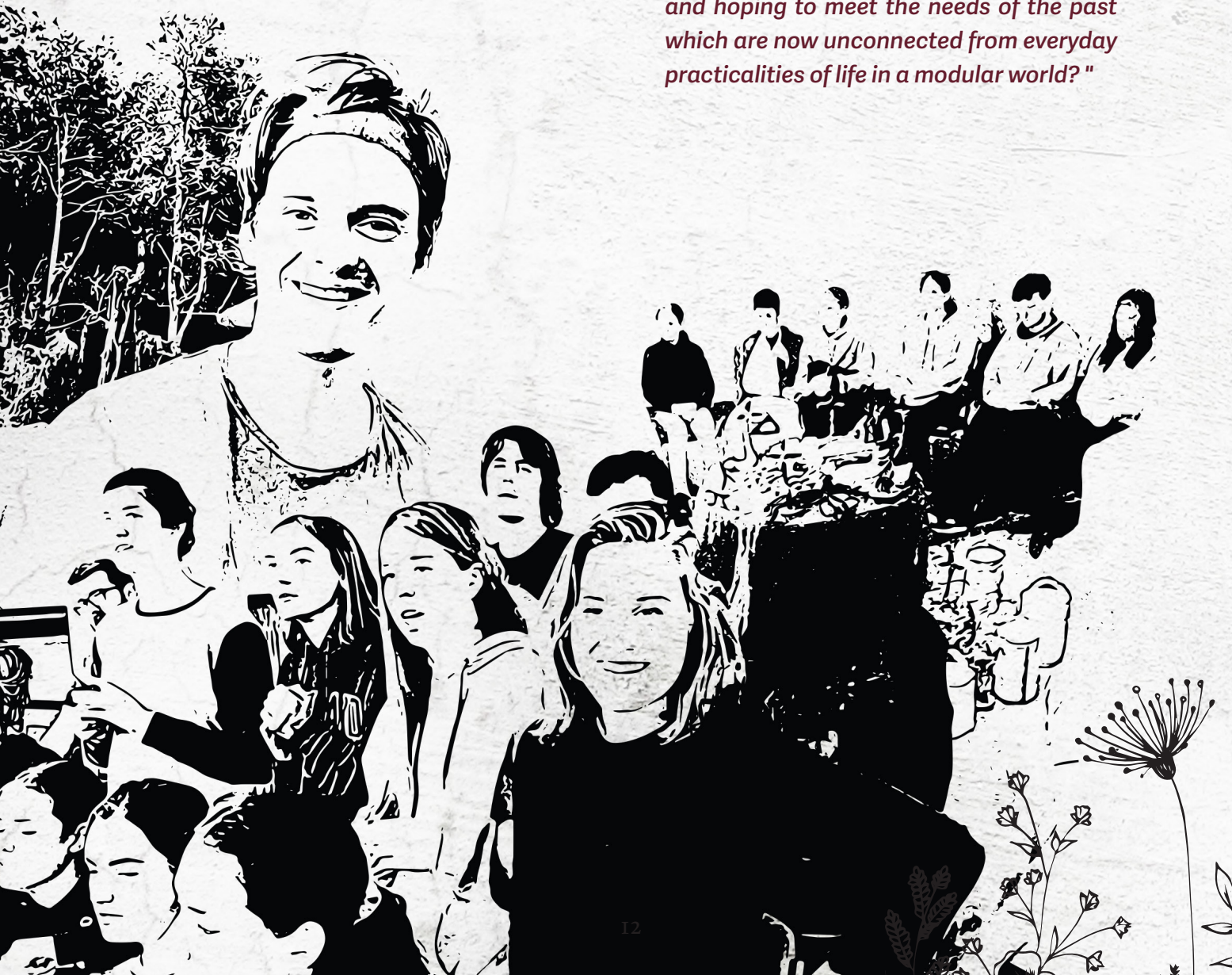
# 06


## Making space for Young People

**Youth and young adults** are a living in a new generation of modularity. In a modular world, everything can be taken apart and reassembled in a new pattern; pieces of life are combined as necessary or desired. Pieces that no longer fit are moved or discarded. This is the new way that young people are viewing and organising their lives - from work to education to relationships. In the not too distant past 'family', 'work' and 'church' were more uniform.

Modularity has changed the culture of family dynamics: for generations a family was two married people of opposite sexes and their biological children however in recent decades variations on that cultural expression have become more common: cohabitating couples with children, same-sex partners with and without children, adoptive families, stepfamilies, single parents, surrogate parents – each of these families becoming more common all with real social, emotional and spiritual needs. Are we in a place to meet these needs?

*"Are we in a place to help or are we waiting and hoping to meet the needs of the past which are now unconnected from everyday practicalities of life in a modular world?"*





The career used to be a steady 9-5, Monday to Friday job but as the career landscape has changed it has left smaller 'pieces' of work. It is more often we hear of young adults contracting, scraping together full-time hours by piecing multiple short and midterm assignments rather than a long-term permanent employment. This is resulting in differing needs than in times past: sustainable work-life balance in a market that is constantly shifting, affordable childcare, the ability to juggle financial obligations and uncertain streams of income. These pressures have social, emotional and spiritual impact. Are we in a place to help or are we waiting and hoping to meet the needs of the past which are now unconnected from everyday practicalities of life in a modular world?

***"What part do intergenerational relationships play in your approach and how could you make them a greater priority?"***

If modularity is changing what people need from churches, it must also be changing how people engage with churches. When I think of church, I think of a time to worship, a place to serve, inspiring Bible teachings, fellowship... But it is now 2021, there is fellowship on Facebook, bible teachings on podcasts and opportunity to serve in the community through crisis centres etc. And if the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that we can even 'attend' church in our pyjamas by streaming through zoom.

We aren't the only faith community struggling with how to get young people in their doors, and I don't have the answers myself. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, however research undertaken by Barna Group and Cornerstone Knowledge Network have cited these 5 points of connection are the outcomes we must seek if we truly hope to make space for young people.

1. Cultural discernment – engaging with the wider culture as a faith community to assess and respond biblically to its effects of human flourishing
2. Life-shaping relationships – consistent, long-term friendship with at least one older Christian adult who invests time and resources into their lives
3. A firsthand experience of Jesus – the confidence, through seasons of doubt and pain, that comes from having personally experienced God
4. Reverse mentoring – being valued for knowledge, skills and energy they can offer to members of the congregation
5. Vocational discipleship – whole-life spiritual formation that includes understanding their work as a God-given call

Along with family and work- church is no longer a monolithic package deal, the challenge for us as a faith community is to help youth and young adults identify what pieces of 'church' are inadequate, misshapen or missing from their modular lives and then help them rebuild or fill in the gaps – and connect the pieces of family, work and faith into a cohesive, whole, Jesus shaped life.

*Alicia Turner  
Youth & Young Adult Minister*

*How well is your congregation adapting to the new cultural reality of modularity – and what can you do less of, more of or differently to minister effectively to and with the next generation?*

*What do you really think about younger people? How does your perception colour your expectations of and impact your work with youth and young adults?*

*Where do people in your community go for respite – and what could your church do to offer space and atmosphere for peaceful reflection?*

*What part do intergenerational relationships play in your approach and how could you make them a greater priority?*