Next Gen Discipleship is committed to helping the local church increase its capacity to build disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world through ministry with children, youth, young adults, college students, and family systems throughout the Tennessee Conference of The United Methodist Church.

This ministry area was formed in 2016 by combining two ministry areas—Children and Family Ministry and Young People’s Ministry. This formation will enhance the development of a holistic discipleship plan that equips church leaders—both lay and clergy—in best practices for engaging all ages in the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ.

Children’s and Family Ministry
During 2016, the Children’s Ministry Discipleship Team met for a visioning retreat. The following values and goals for the next three years were articulated:

Values
Intentional: We are focused, purposeful, engaged, meaningful, mindful, and committed in our actions.
Relational: We create space for respectful collaboration, where we empathize and engage, while holding each other accountable.
Spiritual Depth: We commit to being rooted and grounded in our own faith so we can carry out our ministry and assist others to do the same.
Encouraging: We support and affirm each other by validating the thoughts and actions of the others on our team.
Diverse: We are intentional in including a variety of voices in our conversations and planning.
Connectional: We commit to reaching across the conference to cooperate and collaborate in shared ministry.

Goals
1. We will implement a full menu of children’s ministry training opportunities across the conference. This includes training for new children’s ministry leaders, practical and program-related content, as well as deeper leadership and spiritual development.
   2017 Benchmark: We developed a network of leaders who train and coach, and a training calendar for those who train trainers. We explored conference-wide training opportunities for ongoing training needs.
2. We created a Children’s Ministry Faith Formation Strategy that churches can contextualize and personalize. This strategy includes both church-based and family-engaged components.
   2017 Benchmark: We have formed a team to review best practices and faith formation. We have developed a template for churches to form their specific contextual strategies.
3. The Children’s Ministry Discipleship Team sponsored six annual children’s ministry events throughout the conference, which include confirmation retreats, family events, pre-teen events, children’s spiritual life, Created by God events and retreats, and worship arts events.
   2017 Benchmark: The Children’s Ministry Discipleship Team has formed design teams for each retreat. The dates, sites, and opportunities have been scheduled on the calendar and a plan for publicizing has been developed.
4. A conference-wide worship arts program has been developed. The program started with a children’s choir and has expanded as interests and passions are nurtured.
   2017 Benchmark: We have identified ages, sites, and the initial focus for the first event.
5. A central communication plan for all children’s ministry-related news has been implemented. This plan will provide a space where all information is funneled so anyone can find information they desire about ministry with children in the Tennessee Conference at all times.
   2017 Benchmark: We identified a point person to contact that will help coordinate information received. A monthly newsletter has been developed that includes curriculum links, best practices, welcoming of new children’s ministry leaders, a link to the conference children’s ministry calendar, and other locally sponsored children and family focused opportunities.

Youth Ministry
The Conference Council on Youth Ministry continues to provide opportunities for youth and youth ministry leaders to engage in fellowship and worship together. After seven Warmth in Winters at the Embassy Suites Convention Center in Murfreesboro, 2017 marked a new era at Opryland Hotel and Convention Center. Due to impressive
growth, the Murfreesboro site was no longer large enough to hold the worship weekend. This event has seen consistent growth since 2009 when attendance was just over 1,800 youth and adults to 2017’s record attendance of 2,620. That is an increase of 31 percent over that time. The largest jump in attendance came between 2015 and 2017. 2015’s attendance saw 2,150 youth and adults. That is an increase of 470 persons in two years! Warmth in Winter is more than just a fun weekend filled with fellowship and worship experiences. By design, it is a leadership development pipeline for the Tennessee Conference. More than 100 youth and adults partner each year to design, create, and implement the vision for this ministry retreat. The young people who have served on design teams for this event serve in their church youth groups and participate in campus ministries after high school. Many return to serve on the design teams as college students. Still others hear the call to professional ministry because of the experience and leadership opportunities received through the Warmth in Winter design process.

The CCYM designed and led a retreat for 3rd-6th graders called the BE Retreat in March at Beersheba Springs Assembly with 60 in attendance.

**CCYM 2016-2017** (elected at Summer Sizzler 2016—term August 1, 2016, to July 31, 2017)
President – Amelia Clark, St. Mark’s
Vice-president – Beth Shirley, St. Mark’s
Secretary – Paige Hrobsky, Hartsville First
Conference representatives – Georgia Touchton, St. Mark’s and Junior McNnane, Bellevue
Communications chair – Jacob Brack, Hilldale
Assistant communications chair – Collins Fisкус, Epworth
BMCR representatives – Alexandria Fields, Gordon Memorial and Trinity Fields, Gordon Memorial
Middle school representatives – Rachael Horne, Coleman Memorial and Spencer Fontenot, Coleman Memorial
Journalist – Anna Voorhees, City Road
Warmth in Winter Lead Team – WnW2017: Abigail Overstreet, Franklin First; WnW2018: Matthew Junard, Hillerest; WnW2019: Madison Beckman, St. Mark’s
Youth Service Fund – Emma Counce, Coleman Memorial

The Smaller Church Youth Ministry Initiative continues to have a vital impact through strengthening smaller congregations in the Tennessee Conference. Since it began in 2013, 48 congregations have participated. In 2016, 12 churches engaged in the yearlong training and coaching program. Each church was assigned a local ministry coach to help build sustainable systems and structures for ministry. The coach serves to help the ministry team implement processes to increase their capacity for discipleship formation. These coaches continue to provide insight and support to the churches that participated in the 2016 cohort. These coaches are also working to help support past SCYMI participants as they continue to build ministries that build disciples.

Because of the impact of this ministry, Brad Fiscus and Stephanie Caro were asked to write a book for The United Methodist Publishing House. This book called – Small(er) Church Youth Ministry: No Staff, No Money, No Problem has become one of the leading resources for smaller congregations across all denominations. In 2017, the Small(er) Church Youth Ministry Initiative will transform into the Next Gen Ministry Initiative. This new model will begin in the fall 2017 and continue through spring 2018. It will stay true to its vision of helping churches build sustainable systems and structures to build disciples not only of youth but also of all people.

**Young Adult and College Ministry**

There is a resurgence occurring in young adult and college ministry in the Tennessee Conference. The impact of partner ministries like Project Transformation Tennessee, Camping and Retreat Ministries, and the growth of the collegiate ministries of the Tennessee Conference attest to this. College students and young adults are engaged in opportunities for spiritual formation through local church ministries, Wesley fellowships and campus ministry groups, and through opportunities to engage in mission through partner organizations like Open Table Nashville and Mountain TOP. Each summer the Young Adult Council offers a Young Adult Retreat at Beersheba Springs Assembly that combines conversation, Bible study, hiking, and fellowship.