

UNITED CHURCH of GOD

an International Association

A Playbook for

YOUNG ADULT WEEKENDS





One

INTRODUCTION

What better way to support young adults in building relationships, growing spiritually and engaging actively than by organizing a special weekend event designed just for them?

From activities and presentations to accommodations and travel arrangements, managing the numerous details of a young adult weekend can be challenging. However, this guide is designed to assist you every step of the way.

Financial considerations

Funding is often one of the most worrisome considerations when planning a young adult weekend. However, it doesn't have to be a barrier. We'll provide resources on how to budget for an event and even request a subsidy to help cover costs.

Events can vary in cost, and depending on your needs, you have the option to make the weekend a free event for which attendees arrange their own transportation, food and lodging; an all-inclusive event with a fee; or some combination of the two. The QR code at the end of this guide will provide access to a sample budget outline you can use.

Transportation

Church members are often spread out geographically, but coordinating travel can help make it easier to meet in person. By grouping arrival and departure times, you can more easily arrange transportation for your young adults, such as shuttles or car-pools to and from the airport. This can help alleviate financial or distance constraints, making it more feasible for everyone to come. The QR code at the end of this guide will provide access to a transportation form you can use.

Lodging

Depending on the length of your weekend and the number of attendees, there are several great lodging options to con-

sider. On-your-own lodging can include booking a hotel room or arranging to stay with a local member. If you include lodging in the cost of your weekend, you might also consider booking an entire block of hotel rooms, renting a large Vrbo or Airbnb, or even renting a campsite.

Schedule

There's no one-size-fits-all schedule that dictates success when it comes to a young adult weekend, but it is helpful to consider some of the various options:

Is this a long weekend (Friday-Monday) or a two-day (Sabbath and Sunday) event? On what days will attendees travel to and from the weekend, and how does that align with other calendar considerations?

How much time will be dedicated to Bible studies, presentations, discussions, activities or socializing? A sample schedule is available on page 9.

A successful weekend!

Finally, this guide includes a checklist on page 11, along with a link to download an Excel version of the tables provided here.



Two

ACTIVITIES

Planning activities can seem challenging at first, given the many options, and the fact that not all options will appeal to all attendees. How can you navigate this to make the weekend feel exciting, welcoming and beneficial for everyone?

Vary activity types

Undoubtedly, a young adult weekend will benefit from the spiritual direction provided in seminars and Bible studies. However, a good balance also includes a mix of other elements, such as service, shared meals and having fun together.

Providing a variety of activities helps create a welcoming environment.

It's easier to provide a variety of activities if you think of them in categories, such as spiritual instruction, outdoor activities, indoor games and service projects. Decide on the focus of the weekend and plan accordingly. If your weekend theme is "Making the Most of Your Talents," a networking opportunity or hands-on service project might make more sense than a day-long canoe trip that takes everyone off-site for a large portion of the weekend. However, if the event is centered around a longer activity, such as a 10-mile hike, it might be better to incorporate other elements into the hike, such as sharing spiritual discussion questions at rest stops or cooking a meal together at a campsite.

When planning activities, consider the following:

Age of participants

Within the young adult demographic, remember that many participants may be under 21. For example, if you

plan a wine and cheese event, you must ensure that only those of an appropriate age have access to alcohol. Additionally, some young adults may be married couples with children. Consider whether your activities (and the weekend as a whole) will be open to young couples bringing their children, or if babysitting support will be required.

Safety considerations

To ensure everyone has a positive and safe experience, have a plan in place for those with health considerations that may prevent them from participating in certain activities. For instance, have an alternate option available, such as tables with games for those who are unable to dance, or gluten- and dairy-free options for a dessert social.

Some types of specialty events require a certain level of skill to uphold safety requirements, including sports such as skiing, mountain biking and scuba diving. It's best to collect information about a participant's skill level ahead of time, and to ensure appropriately skilled professionals are on hand to supervise the activity and train new participants.

Activity ideas

Although there is no perfect activity lineup for a young adult weekend, several options used in past events are listed below to help you get started:

- Games (Sports, interactive, board games, etc.)
- Dancing (line, swing, square, etc.)
- Karaoke or variety show
- Horseback riding
- Mountain biking
- Campfire (can be held indoors with a fireplace)
- Hiking (or for extended trips, backpacking)

As you plan and promote activities, remember that your enthusiasm will impact whether others enjoy the event and feel motivated to participate fully. Where possible, delegate activity planning to individuals who are excited to share this activity with others.

Three

PREPARING FOR A PRESENTATION



Long before the young adult weekend begins, speakers must begin preparing their topics to share with attendees. Although some presentations are structured like a TED Talk followed by a Q&A session, others may be formatted as an interactive discussion throughout. Depending on your topic and time considerations, the best format will vary.

Preparing the message

Presentations are typically 15-20 minutes, followed by prepared discussion questions. Alternatively, presentations can be longer if designed as an interactive discussion format. Whenever possible, select young adults to lead presentations. All presentations and questions should be discussed, edited and previewed prior to the weekend. This process helps ensure successful delivery of well-prepared topics.

One method of review for presentations involves submitting an idea and outline, followed by a practice run either over the phone or in person. This allows presenters to receive helpful feedback ahead of time, and ensures the material is focused, effective and spiritually sound. Practicing more than once will help refine the presentations and boost confidence.

Planning materials

Presentations often benefit from visual tools or handouts to engage with the audience. As you craft your message, plan ahead of time whether you will use PowerPoint, a whiteboard or a flipchart to interact with the audience. Some other helpful items to have on hand include 3x5 cards, pens and printed handouts/worksheets.

Practicing before the presentation is an important step in the planning process.

Try to find out in advance if you will have access to items such as a printer or projector. Don't wait until you arrive at the weekend to coordinate with the AV/sound team on technology requirements. It's also important to know the layout of the room ahead of time when planning.



Consider creative and cost-effective ways of increasing interaction, such as using a form accessed through a QR code for participants to submit and vote on questions or providing survey questions with live results projected.

***There are many ways to keep
a group discussion engaging;
be open to creativity!***

Setting the scene

Before the presentation, make an effort to get to know as many attendees as possible. Some event coordinators have found that holding an opening mixer at the beginning of the weekend and using name tags have been helpful in making an early connection with the audience.

Set round tables, ideally seating 6-8 young adults per table. Arrange chairs so that everyone will easily be able to turn to see the speaker. No round tables? No problem! Simply clear the center of the room and allow participants to arrange chairs into circles for group discussions.

Depending on the method of feedback you will be using, set tables with pens and index cards or with printed QR placards that are easy for all to access.

Creating an engaging environment

Our young adult group is made up of individuals, each with unique stories and life experiences. This brings a richness to the study of the Word. Creating a space where they can share their unique perspectives with each other helps unify and strengthen their relationships with God and each other.

Formatting discussions into breakout groups is an effective way to handle a topic with a larger crowd. To keep these breakout groups running efficiently, appoint a group leader for each table.

Use creative methods to appoint the leader, such as choosing the person who woke up earliest, or the person wearing the most blue, or by drawing a card from a deck where the lowest- or highest-numbered card determines the leader.

Within the discussion itself, there are various ideas to make the topic engaging. Be open to creativity!

For example, purchase small handheld whiteboards and small dry-erase markers for each young adult to jot down a quick response or create a simple drawing to express their thoughts on a question. Then, ask them to hold up their boards for everyone to see. You could also place a stack of blank index cards on the tables along with enough Sharpie markers for each participant.



Four

FACILITATING A SUCCESSFUL DISCUSSION

Launch

Connect your topic to a biblical story or related topic. Perhaps begin by asking a question that piques interest or raises a problem or issue that your Biblical topic addresses.

Explore

First, present the big picture. Give attendees a brief overview of the context they'll need to understand your topic.

Then, explore the passage by asking exploratory questions to help them discover what God is saying. Use the following types of questions: "What does it say?" (observation questions) "What does it mean?" (interpretation questions) "Why does it matter?" (significance questions).

Finally, ask a question to help your audience catch the main point of the topic.

Apply

Lead your audience to a heart-level response to God. Remember that your teaching will be most effective when it is aligned with God's redemptive purposes.

Ask a couple of questions that help them envision what it would look like to practically live out this passage. Then pose a few questions that expose potential heart-resistance to the instruction.

Ask what aspect(s) of the lesson they need to believe and embrace in order to live out the instruction.

Break the Ice

One of the aims of group discussion is to get beneath the surface to what's truly going on in people's lives. However, young adults may need time to warm up. Remember, their minds and hearts are shifting into gear from the previous days' travel or the late-night Sabbath fellowship. They may not be ready at the outset to dive into deep spiritual thoughts from the heart on the biblical topic.

To help warm up the young adults, consider the following:

Provide attendees with the theme of the weekend and with open-ended questions in advance. You might also set aside a few minutes to review the topic and questions during breakfast on the morning of the Bible group discussion.

It is helpful to align the Sabbath sermon topic to provide an effective "compliment" to the Bible discussion. If possible, use the sermon to set a good foundation for the discussion later. Consider having Sabbath services before the interactive Bible study to help unlock thoughts that can be discussed further.

Master the use of "question and answer" techniques to enhance group discussion. The conversation is strongly impacted by the type of questions asked.

Questions such as "Who is the author of the Bible book we are studying?" require a precise answer and can discourage group discussion. Group discussion thrives on "open" questions that begin with phrases such as "In your opinion . . ." or "Can you think of ways . . ." These questions do not require a precise "right answer," but encourage different, thoughtful responses.

Set a Balanced Pace

Inexperienced group leaders often get anxious after asking a question.

The temptation is to wait only a few seconds after asking a question before feeling the urge to give your own answer and move on to the next question. When the presenter does this, it prevents participants from having the time to think through a response—let alone share it.

Facilitators need to slow down. There's nothing wrong with posing a question and pausing to let people think about it. You can say, "Take 15–20 seconds to reflect on that before you answer." Perhaps repeat the question a second time or rephrase and ask again.



Gently Guide the Discussion

Discussions can sometimes wander off topic. As the facilitator, it's your responsibility to guide the conversation. While you don't want to be too rigid in following your outline, don't hesitate to speak up and steer the group back to the topic at hand.

Some of the reasons discussions wander off topic can include personality differences, lengthy answers, disagreements, bad theology or unrelated tangents.

Here are some quick transition statements you can use when you need to get things back on track:

"Let's hold onto that for the moment, I'd love to hear more about that when we're done, but I want to make sure we have time for others to share on this topic right now."

"Thanks for sharing! Many people feel the same way. On the other hand, many Scriptures point to . . ."

"Thanks for sharing! I have a few more thoughts I'd like to share with you about that after we're done tonight. In the meantime, does anyone else want to chime in?"

"I appreciate both perspectives. One of the values of group discussion is that it allows us to grow by processing our thoughts out loud, and I appreciate the rest of the group being great listeners. I hope when the discussion is over, everyone feels heard."

Using the phrase, "Let's talk more about that after this point" communicates to the rest of the group that you're going to guide the group back to the topic at hand, but you'll follow up with the person or issue later. In other words, you're valuing what they have to say while effectively facilitating the discussion.

As you can see, guiding a group discussion can be challenging but there's something uniquely special about sitting together with others and learning from God's Word in community. Scripture is a lifeline for young adults and sharing it in discussion with their peers affirms and clarifies its truth.

With the right preparation and God's help, leading an exciting and vibrant group discussion for young adults could become the highlight of the weekend!

Beyond allowing silence in your Bible discussion, you'll also need to learn to listen well in order to slow down the discussion. A popular small-group maxim is the 70/30 Rule, which states that an effective group leader talks only 30 percent of the time and listens the other 70 percent. This ensures full group participation. Relax, take a deep breath, give people time to think and focus your attention on them when they do share to show you're truly listening.

Value Group Insights

We've all experienced group discussions in which someone shares, but the facilitator moves on to the next person or question with little to no acknowledgement of what was just said. After listening to a response, let the participant know you heard them. Engage with each young adult's contribution and affirm what they've shared. Here are some ways to do that:

"Thanks for sharing that!" "That's really good!" "What I hear you saying is . . ."

"Can you tell me more about that?" "Thank you for your honesty."

This is a small way that you can reward the people in your group for their participation. It makes them feel heard, valued, safe and encouraged to share again.

However, avoid over-praising any one individual. You might unintentionally alienate the others by making one person feel like they won "The Answer of the Night" trophy. You want everyone to feel equally appreciated and valued.

Weekend Planner

Item	Responsible	Next Step	Due Date	Complete	Consider
Determine venue, dates		Rent, lease, etc.			Avoid overlapping events
Set event budget		Registration fee			Housing, food, activities
Decide on a theme		Assign speakers			Activity & topic choice
Build registration site*		Create QR code			Payment method & date
Assign responsibilities		Planning meeting			See chart below
Schedule		Create brochure			
Advertise event**		Social media			Announcement, fliers
Registration		Send schedule			Arranging transportation
Lodging (if applicable)		Notify attendees			Assign rooms
Purchase supplies					Reimburse as appropriate

Responsibilities

Item	Responsible	Details
Coordinator(s)		
Brochure		Consider schedule, address, map
Setup crew		Perform pre-clean
Food		Consider also: coffee station, hot chocolate, etc.
Menu		
Crew members		
Presenters		Consider assigning a book to read prior; communicate this beforehand
Activities (see below)		
Friday		Consider name tags, lanyards
Sabbath		Sabbath services: assign songleader, speakers, special music, etc.
Saturday night		
Sunday		
Monday		
Sound system		Decide who will bring equipment, set up, run, etc.
Photographer		
Cleanup crew		Perform post-clean

Notes:

*RegFox and Webconnex are some popular options for registration forms. Contact david_browning@ucg.org for assistance. Create a coupon code at this time for a discounted early registration or free registration for presenters.

**In addition to fliers and social media, reach out to uya@ucg.org to advertise in the young adult newsletter, peter_eddington@ucg.org to include in the Home Office Weekly Update or un@ucg.org to advertise in *United News* or on the members' website.

Sample Schedule

Friday	
Time	Activity
8:00 a.m.	
9:00 a.m.	
10:00 a.m.	
11:00 a.m.	
12:00 p.m.	
1:00 p.m.	
2:00 p.m.	
3:00 p.m.	
4:00 p.m.	Arrival
5:00 p.m.	
6:00 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 p.m.	Icebreaker
8:00 p.m.	Presentation 1
9:00 p.m.	

Sabbath	
Time	Activity
8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
9:00 a.m.	
10:00 a.m.	
11:00 a.m.	Church services
12:00 p.m.	
1:00 p.m.	Lunch
2:00 p.m.	
3:00 p.m.	Presentation 2
4:00 p.m.	Presentation 3
5:00 p.m.	Presentation 4
6:00 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 p.m.	Game night
8:00 p.m.	
9:00 p.m.	

Sunday	
Time	Activity
8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
9:00 a.m.	Presentation 5
10:00 a.m.	Activity
11:00 a.m.	
12:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 p.m.	Activity
2:00 p.m.	
3:00 p.m.	Hike
4:00 p.m.	
5:00 p.m.	
6:00 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 p.m.	Campfire
8:00 p.m.	
9:00 p.m.	

Monday	
Time	Activity
8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
9:00 a.m.	Clean up
10:00 a.m.	
11:00 a.m.	Checkout
12:00 p.m.	
1:00 p.m.	
2:00 p.m.	
3:00 p.m.	
4:00 p.m.	
5:00 p.m.	
6:00 p.m.	
7:00 p.m.	
8:00 p.m.	
9:00 p.m.	

Free Templates

To download an editable Excel version of this and the other charts included in this guide, scan this QR code:



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I decide on and establish a theme?

If you're at a loss for which theme will best suit your weekend, consider some of the following:

- Time of year; phase of life participants are in
- Tie-in with other program, such as UYC theme
- Survey data from previous young adult events
- Ask others which themes have previously been used

Questions? Contact: Scott McKeon (scott_mckeon@ucg.org)

How should my team handle registration?

Although there are many registration options available, consider first whether you might use a resource the Church already has available. For instance, you can contact a home office representative to get access to registration through RegFox (a WebConnex product) or through the UCG website.

It is also fairly easy to set up a registration page through Google Forms if you have a small number of attendees and only need a limited number of details.

Questions? Contact: David Browning (david_browning@ucg.org) or Heidi Braun (heidi_braun@ucg.org)

How can I collect and manage payment?

If you are using a registration tool like RegFox or collecting registrations through the UCG website, payment will be included in that process.

However, if you are using a different method of registration, consider using a secure online method of collecting payment such as Zelle, PayPal or Venmo. Although cash and checks remain an option, they require more work to process on your end, and may not be delivered in time to confirm payment before the weekend, so they usually work better for collecting donations at the event rather than a means of paying for registration beforehand.

Questions? Contact: David Browning (david_browning@ucg.org)

How can I promote my event?

There are several great ways to spread the word about your young adult weekend! Below are a few:

- *United News*—email un@ucg.org. Allow two to three months before the registration deadline.
- Home Office Weekly Update—email peter_eddington@ucg.org
- United Young Adults newsletter—email uya@ucg.org
- UCG social media—email elizabeth_bissessar@ucg.org
- Members' calendar—email heidi_braun@ucg.org

Credits:

Ministerial and Member Services: Steve Myers

Writers: Scott McKeon, Heidi Braun

Copy editor: Julia Tomes

Layout and Design: Heidi Braun

Hosting a **YOUNG ADULT WEEKEND** *doesn't have to be difficult!*

If you're looking for young adult activities in your area, but find your social calendar is empty, we have an exciting opportunity for you!

What better way to build meaningful relationships, grow spiritually and make the most of your talents than by hosting an event for others your age? Don't despair if the nearest event is hundreds of miles away! We invite you to create your very own young adult weekend, and we walk you through the process step-by-step. This guide includes best practices from others who have hosted a weekend, helpful charts to keep your planning on target and resources for finding the support you need.



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