

## Understanding Youth Ministry in Anglican Diocese of Ughelli: Development, Challenges and Prospects

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*Abstract— This paper examines the history, challenges, and potential of youth ministry in the Anglican Diocese of Ughelli, emphasizing its role in developing faith, community, and leadership among young people. Christianity has challenged societal conventions, with young people driving these transforming initiatives. In Nigeria, the Anglican Diocese of Ughelli has seen the importance of youth ministry in addressing spiritual, interpersonal, and psychological needs of young adults.*

**Keywords:** Christian Clerics; Good Governance; Nigeria; Ughelli; Delta State.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the 21st century, marked by the rapid movement of metropolitan centres and an unrelenting surge in economic, social, and relational crises, unprecedented difficulties have emerged. Urban migration persists, leading to the enthusiastic and unhesitating adoption of fresh ways of living, ground-breaking ideas, and fascinating ideologies (Borgman, 2003). The widespread influence of these concepts, especially when broadcast through the mass media, is impossible to overstate. On the other hand, essential concerns concerning sex, values of humanity, and morality, which have traditionally been seen to come under the purview of the church's influence, are routinely ignored (Zirschky, 2015). Inadvertently, this leads to an incorrect attribution of the rising moral decay to the church. Nevertheless, it is of the utmost importance to understand that Christianity has fearlessly challenged the conventions of society, with young people being the driving force behind these transforming initiatives (Mueller, 2006). Not only is this particular fact true for the whole of Nigeria, but it is also true for the revered Anglican Diocese of Ughelli. As early as 1962, it became clear that highly trained catechists played an essential part in supporting the successful penetration of Christianity inside each community within the diocese. Historical records confirm this realization.

With the Anglican Communion in particular, youth ministry has become an increasingly important part of the life of the church. In the setting of the Anglican Diocese of Ughelli, youth ministry provides not simply a means of interacting with young adults but also a framework for addressing the specific spiritual, interpersonal, and psychological needs of the youth. The ministry addresses all these needs. The paper examines the history, difficulties, and potential of youth ministry in the Anglican Diocese of Ughelli. It emphasizes the value of youth ministry in contributing to the development of faith, community, and leadership among young people (Nel, 2003a). The study employed phenomenological and content analysis methodologies. This approach involves performing oral interviews with essential stakeholders, including youth leaders, church leaders, and youth participants, to collect varied viewpoints on youth ministry, alongside examining extant literature on youth ministry within Anglican contexts to identify recent developments, frameworks of theory, and contemporary trends. This also includes observing youth ministries' events and programs to analyze interactions, participation rates, and engagement tactics.

## **ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF UGHELLI**

The Anglican Diocese of Ughelli is a component of the Church of Nigeria, which is a part of the Anglican Communion. The Church of Nigeria is one of the largest provinces in the Anglican Communion worldwide. The Anglican Diocese of Ughelli is located in Delta State, Nigeria. It was established in the year 1991. This establishment aimed to meet the spiritual needs of the growing Anglican community in the area. Evangelism, church planting, as well as community development is all areas that the diocese places a strong emphasis on, with a combined emphasis on spiritual

development and social responsibility. The organization operates numerous parishes and missions throughout the region, engaging in a range of outreach initiatives aimed at reducing poverty, enhancing health, and educating individuals.

A bishop and several clergy and lay leaders form the governing body of the diocese, working together to advance the church's mission (Dafiewhare, 2006). Additionally, the diocese is a member of the larger Anglican Communion and works together with other Christian groups to engage in ecumenical endeavours. In general, the Anglican Diocese of Ughelli plays an important part in the religious as well as social landscape of Delta State, contributing to the growth of the community's spirituality and overall well-being.

### CONCEPTUALIZATION OF YOUTH MINISTRY

Aziz (2019) describes youth ministry as a Christian ministry which focuses on helping and discipline young people between the ages of 12 and 45 to stay loyal to God and to share the gospel with their peers. As part of the church, it entails doing activities such as teaching God's word, sharing experiences from life, praying together, and offering spiritual support and counseling to members of the congregation. The necessity of youth ministry has been acknowledged by churches from the middle to late nineteenth century. As a result, churches have established youth groups and youth pastors to protect young people from the effects of secular forces and to lead them in issues of faith and daily life (Baleka, 2011). The objective was to instill a strong adherence to the Christian religion in youngsters and to train the coming generations of worshipers and leaders.

Jacobson (2011) explained that the Christian youth ministry is an essential component of the church's mission, with the primary objective being to provide young people with spiritual guidance and support. The message inspires individuals to cultivate a personal connection with God and to put their Christian beliefs into practice in their daily lives. Nel (2003a) listed among other most important parts of Christian youth ministry to include the following: spiritual formation via Bible study, prayer, worship, and fellowship; discipleship and mentorship; community and fellowship; leadership development; and connection with the larger church. One of the most important components of youth ministry is discipleship, which is when more experienced or senior Christians act as mentors to younger believers, therefore assisting them in developing their faith and providing them with direction. Young people need to have a secure and supportive atmosphere in which they may talk about their challenges and concerns about religion (Mueller, 2006). Community and fellowship are vital components that provide this environment. The cultivation of spiritual abilities and talents for the sake of service is another essential component of leadership development.

According to Aziz (2014), one of the primary focuses of youth ministry is holistic development, which takes into account not only the spiritual needs of the kids but also their emotional, social, and physical well-being. It is possible for youth ministry to take

on certain forms or to place an emphasis on particular areas of worship and service when it is situated within the framework of particular church traditions. This is done to coincide with the larger purpose and liturgical practices of the church. For Nel (2018), the initial emphasis is on biblically evaluating the foundation and perspective of youth, with the idea that the church's long-standing image of youth as being morally inferior is not beneficial for youth ministry in the modern day. The idea of the "character of youth" was the subject of the second concentration by Zirschky (2015). As a result of the fact that God calls all young people who are members of the church to actively participate to body life, disconnection and inactivity in body life are anomalies of grace for those who are young. Teaching, modeling, recognizing, equipping, a mix of family and church engagement, as well as pastoral care and discipline, were some of the other helpful elements that were discussed along the way. Seven major areas of ministry that are aimed to assist young people in fulfilling their commitment to love one another were also discussed in White's (2005) work.

### **YOUTH MINISTRY IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES**

The influence of youth ministry in modern Christian communities is significantly shaped by the model of Jesus' ministry towards young individuals and His incorporation of youth within the foundational early Christian communities. This paper provides a literature review that examines the involvement of youth in Christian communities throughout history, with a specific focus on four pertinent Biblical references. Chancey and Bruner's (2017) work aim to establish a basis for youth ministry and participation in contemporary Christian contexts, which directly contests prevalent Christian perceptions regarding the role of children and young people (also see Borgman, 2003). For those young individuals raised within church environments, their comprehension of Christ and His teachings often serves as a central reference point for faith and organized religion. According to Dunn and Senter III (1997), the interplay between Christ's teachings, faith, and the roles, status and faith experiences of young people constitutes a crucial aspect of analyzing the contemporary engagement of youth in the church. It is arguable that all central Christian doctrines are intrinsically connected to the mystery of Christ's personage, to whom the gospel of Christian faith is directed.

Early Christian communities are frequently depicted as having arisen from the itinerant preaching of apostles and disciples converted by them (Ragira, 2017). The apostolic proclamation fostered a tightly-knit, charismatic community characterized by a distinct lifestyle and diverse practices. This principle strongly implies that a considerable number of young Christians were present and active within early Christian communities. A key challenge in evaluating the role of youth in early Christian communities is defining who comprises "youth" in that context. In contemporary discourse, youth typically refers to individuals aged thirteen to twenty-four; however, in Greco-Roman society, youth were not recognized as a distinct social category but were defined relationally in connection to adults (Wimberley, Barnes &

Johnson, 2013). Regarding life stages, most authors in the Greco-Roman era classified human life into three equal phases: childhood, maturity, and old age. Childhood was considered to last until individuals reached physical adulthood, typically at puberty, around age sixteen for females and eighteen to twenty for males (Mueller, 2006). Establishing age brackets for communities, particularly those from pre-modern societies, is often based on presumptions that reflect societal views of youth and age. This perception is pivotal, as what is considered young in one culture may not be viewed similarly in another. Definitions of youth can differ significantly, marking modern understandings ranging from ages twelve to thirty. According to Chancey and Bruner (2017), in ancient times, particularly the Greco-Roman period, youth constituted a transitional phase where males progressed from dependence to independence, characterized by aspirations and expectations regarding behavior, attire, and respectability. Similarly, women, despite often experiencing misogyny and limited standing, could teach within established guidelines. The issue of gender and oppression, along with ideals and divisions of youth during the Greco-Roman and Early Christian eras, merits scrutiny, focusing on marital and spiritual concerns, cultural influences, and the dynamics within defined generations.

No discussion of youth is complete without examining Biblical perspectives on the matter. The Bible contains numerous references to youth, with particular focus on Biblical views of Christians in the formative epochs of Christianity. These perspectives chronicle narratives such as Abraham's advocacy for a town and convey foundational ideals for the young, urging community engagement and responsibility (Mahan, 2008). In the New Testament, "youth" often symbolizes Christian maturation, positively connoting genuine participation in the divine life. Attributes such as overcoming temptation, possessing knowledge of God, and maintaining a strong inner spiritual presence are associated with youth. Contextual analysis of these metaphors reveals their typological richness and applicability. The early Christian concern for youth is reflected in gospel depictions of Jesus' interactions with children, emphasizing His non-judgmental acceptance despite adult rejections (Root, 2007). These narratives highlight Jesus' intention to create a new societal order through His teachings. The moral and inclusive connotations of Christian baptism further invigorated notions of youth participation, transcending age differences and societal hierarchies emphasized by Greco-Roman writers.

The first-century Mediterranean world featured a sophisticated educational and social framework marked by distinct societal stratifications, deriving significantly from Greek city-state polity (Chancey & Bruner, 2017). Urban centers displayed varied organization, with the Roman Empire maintaining a specific structure that sought to isolate specialized education systems. However, the early Christian evolution within the empire indicates an increasing engagement with social structures that were deeply hierarchical in nature. Connections across generations, and the acknowledgment of youth's roles in early Christian communities extended beyond identity formation and collective functions (Chancey & Bruner, 2017). Investigation into these communities

indicates that youth actively contributed—teaching and preaching the faith, serving as witnesses, and assisting fellow Christians (Guder, 2015). Previous studies affirm that youth were pivotal in advancing Christianity, often positioned as leaders within local religious assemblies.

Historical records suggest that even during Jesus' ministry, youth played a notable role (Frank, 2007). While references to their participation are sparse, accounts of their involvement during key events testify to their presence and significance. The distribution of food and the practice of communal meals further illustrate young people's engagement in early Christian fellowship. Contemporary youth studies increasingly focus on gender-related issues concerning the construction of youth roles and identities amidst varying cultural contexts. The homogeneity of youth experiences may obscure critical variations in terms of ethnicity, age, and socio-economic status, necessitating gender-sensitive approaches to youth studies. Research indicates that despite numerical disparities in gender, the experiences and roles of women within communities reflect significant contributions to early Christian life. Young women, often linked to their socio-economic standing and ethnicity, played crucial roles within the church, sometimes acting as leaders or benefactors. These women were essential in guiding church leaders and contributing to community development, often exerting influence moving beyond traditional gender roles.

According to Droege (2017), the participation of young individuals in early Christian martyrdom signifies not merely the developmental role of these communities but also their commitment during periods of persecution. This experience bore witness to both active and passive forms of testimony, which shaped the identity and resilience of the youth within these contexts. The narratives of youthful martyrs render them emblematic of faith and dedication, embodying moral and ethical virtues central to early Christian teachings. Their martyrdom narratives contribute significantly to the overarching understanding of young individuals' societal roles, as they navigate complex cultural terrains while affirming their faith. Christian theological perspectives emphasize the moral obligation to assist those in need, aligning with the embodiment of charity as a virtue (Richter, 2001). The call to assistance extends to youth, who are integral members in pursuing justice and altruism within communal contexts. Biblical underpinnings advocate for youth engagement in significant spiritual narratives, highlighting their integral role within the Christian message.

Early Christian literature often draws upon the experience of youth to illustrate moral and ethical directives within the community (Frank, 2007). The emphasis lies on their development and social integration as vital components of communal life. Youthful characters present in early Christian texts serve as models for discipleship while facing common adolescent challenges. Their portrayal reflects broader societal roles, providing valuable insights into the lived experiences of youth during formative Christian centuries. The involvement of young individuals in early Christian liturgical practices underscores their importance in religious rituals. Families served as primary educators, enabling youths to participate in collective worship, which reinforced

communal bonds and religious identity. The integration of youth into worship practices can be viewed through the lens of familial roles, where children actively engage in rituals, thereby strengthening their religious upbringing and community connection (Frank, 2007). Early Christian missionary activity prominently featured youth, reflecting their vital role in the dissemination of the Christian message. These young Christians navigated societal perceptions, often undertaking their missionary duties with enthusiasm and bravery.

Youth participation within early Christian missionary efforts signifies an imperative momentum for community growth, calling for renewed focus on their role in contemporary evangelism. Scriptural references to youth underscore their responsibility to advocate for the less fortunate, reinforcing the importance of justice and community support within early Israel and beyond (Clark, 2015). Active youth engagement in social issues reflects their commitment to the core values of Christianity, demonstrating an intertwined relationship between faith and societal justice. Current youth ministry programmes often struggle with the dual aim of maintaining faith commitment while resonating with the youth's socio-cultural realities. The creation of youth-specific initiatives may inadvertently foster separation between age groups, necessitating a more integrative approach. Reevaluating youth roles in early Christian settings highlights concerns regarding authentic engagement and the ethical implications of their involvement in communal decision-making processes. Establishing connections between ancient practices and present realities requires an inclusive approach to young adult participation within church communities. Modern diversity should echo the more intricate layers of early Christian experiences, shaping vibrant contemporary churches. Today, youthful contributions are paramount in promoting social justice and peace, reinforcing the integral role youth play in shaping future church communities through their faith and engagement.

## **HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH MINISTRY IN THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF UGHELLI**

For the purpose of catering to the ever-increasing need of its younger members, the Anglican Diocese of Ughelli has been concentrating on youth ministry. Youth events, camps, and educational programmes are some of the initiatives that are being undertaken to provide young people with the information and skills necessary to become effective leaders. There are broader movements within the Anglican Church that have modified their approaches in order to remain relevant in a society that is continually changing. The diocese builds the development of youth ministry upon these movements. The Diocese has established a number of programs, such as regular meetings, retreats, and outreach activities, in order to meet the spiritual and social requirements of the younger generation. These initiatives not only help people grow in their religion, but they also help participants develop a sense of community with one another. In addition, the Diocese places a significant focus on leadership training. The Diocese accomplishes this by offering young people the chance to engage in mentorship

programs and workshops, which equip them with the necessary skills to take on leadership roles in both the church and the community.

Within the Anglican Diocese of Ughelli, the youth ministry is committed to assisting youth in their spiritual development, the development of their moral values, and their active engagement in the life of the church. The mission of the ministry is to create an environment of faith while addressing the specific issues that young people in the area encounter. The ministry achieves this by prioritizing both theological instruction and community participation. Among the most important parts of the ministry are the pursuit of spiritual as well as biblical education, the conduct of community outreach and service, the cultivation of leadership, the implementation of holistic development programs, the provision of mentoring and guidance, and the incorporation of technology and contemporary communication. Teaching biblical concepts and Anglican theology is the primary emphasis of the ministry, with the goal of encouraging young people to have a profound interpersonal connection with Christ. The program encourages young people to participate in outreach initiatives that include the local community, such as those that focus on social concerns and environmental stewardship projects. Furthermore, the ministry provides leadership training, equipping young individuals with the necessary skills for future church responsibilities and promoting their active participation in church-organized events, additionally, the ministry mentors and guides young people thus fostering an environment that fosters respect and encouragement in their journey of faith. Through the use of digital platforms and social media, the ministry is able to communicate with younger members, provide information, and arrange events, therefore making participation more accessible.

## **CHALLENGES FACING YOUTH MINISTRY IN THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF UGHELLI**

The Anglican Diocese of Ughelli's youth ministry faces numerous obstacles that hinder its ability to effectively engage young people and foster their spiritual development. Cultural shifts, resource constraints, a lack of trained youth leaders, a reluctance to adapt methods, a lack of involvement from parents, economic challenges, issues of retention and commitment, limited mentorship possibilities, perpetuated disconnect among generations, and political and social unrest are some of the factors that contribute to these challenges. Changing cultural norms and the influence of secular forces often come into conflict with the teachings of traditional religions, making it challenging for young people to fully participate in religious settings. Limited resources restrict the educational and recreational opportunities available to the youths. Additionally, the lack of adequately educated young leaders may contribute to a decrease in the quality of mentoring and spiritual leadership.

Reluctance to use recently developed technology or contemporary ways may hinder the quality of mentoring and spiritual direction. Despite the crucial role parental support plays in the spiritual development of young individuals, some parents may not



actively participate in their children's religious life or prioritize church activities. There are a number of economic problems that might restrict the engagement of young people in church events and activities. These include high unemployment rates and economic hardship. Because many young people may visit church irregularly, it can be challenging to maintain a consistent level of participation. Concerns around retention and commitment are particularly relevant. Because of the age difference that exists between church leadership and young people, young people may sense an estrangement, which might make them feel valued. Limited mentoring options can also contribute to this feeling. To tackle these issues, churches need to introduce innovative approaches in ministry, engage the community and church leadership actively, and foster a culture of openness to change that resonates with the younger generation in the diocese.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: RELATIONAL MINISTRY THEORY**

According to Futgeson (1976), relational ministry theory posits that the relationships between individual youth and their leaders are paramount. Relational ministry emphasizes leadership, instruction, and counseling via a direct connection among the leader as well as the follower. It is a framework whereby the leader consciously engages with their follower, accompanying them in life to direct their journey towards Christ (Futgeson, 1976). The depth of interpersonal connections within the youth group, particularly among peers, is crucial for ongoing engagement.

This theory asserts that individuals build connections with organizations through relational ties, emphasizing the need for authenticity within these relationships - people gravitate towards leaders who are genuine rather than those who adopt a façade. Proponents of relational ministry advocate its relevance within the contemporary spiritual landscape, particularly as the demand for authentic community and relationships surged in the early 21st century (Futgeson, 1976). A significant facet of this theory is mentoring, often correlated with fostering spirituality, self-identity, and a sense of belonging. A recurrent theme in related literature emphasizes the authenticity demanded by youth—leaders must authentically believe in their programs for young individuals to fully engage. Certain inherent traits are closely linked to overstating the importance of leader-youth relationships - some claim that relationships take precedence over Bible teaching (Anderson, 2001). Undoubtedly, these traits drive the participation of both leaders and youth in ministry. The relational approach commonly extends from various programmatic models. It facilitates ongoing developmental progress for adolescents within their youth ministry involvements, highlighting the community's role in spiritual growth alongside leaders or curricular activities.

The Relational ministry theory provides a twofold perspective through which to examine the function that young people play in the ministry. Paul's

message in 1 Timothy 4:12-16 is based on theological concepts that are aligned with the fundamentals of transformational leadership (Needle, 2021). These principles encourage young leaders to act as role models along with agents of change within their community. To provide a complete foundation for the study, this framework serves to bridge the gap between the historical message of the Bible and the present issues that youth ministry in Ughelli finds itself facing. A comprehensive theoretical framework is provided by the incorporation of the Transformational Leadership Theory as well as the Biblical Hermeneutical theory, which is used to study 1 Timothy 4:12-16 within the context of youth ministry. It makes it possible to have a profound comprehension of the text while simultaneously implementing leadership concepts that enable young people to take on leadership roles in the Anglican Diocese of Ughelli, so enabling them to triumph over pressures from society and realize their full potential as spiritual leaders.

#### **THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FOR YOUTH MINISTRY BEST PRACTICES USING 1 TIMOTHY 4: 12-16**

**Verse 12: Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.**

**Verse 13: Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.**

**Verse 14: Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders who laid their hands on you.**

**Verse 15: Practice these things; immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.**

**Verse 16: Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers (RSV).**

1 Timothy is a letter by the Apostle Paul to Timothy, written during A.D. 62-64 during Paul's time in Macedonia (Dionson, 2015). Timothy was sent to Ephesus for duty when 1 Timothy was composed (1 Tim. 1:3). Timothy had adhered to Paul's teachings throughout Paul's time in Lystra, Timothy's homeland, and had accompanied Paul on his voyage through Syria as well as Cilicia (Dionson, 2015). Paul then tasked Timothy with returning to Ephesus to support the belief of the church founded there. According to Knight (1999), Timothy is designated as a "man of God" in 2 Timothy 6:11 and a "disciple" in Acts 16:1. In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul counseled Timothy not to let anybody disparage him due to his youth. At that time, Timothy was presumably about 30 years old, a very youthful age for a church leader (1 Tim. 4:12). Amid the verses of 1 Timothy 4:12-16, several salient theological themes emerge prominently. First and foremost, the 'youthfulness' of Timothy evokes a broader theological perspective. Youth elicits a spectrum of meanings, encompassing promise, potential, and destiny. According to Wilkin (2010), within church-centric environments, the youth demographic has historically faced marginalization, resulting in diminished exposure and leadership opportunities.

In contrast, Mounce (2000) argues that this passage implicitly grants young individuals full scriptural authority as an intrinsic facet of their leadership. Similarly, church leaders, ecclesiastical authorities, and the broader community are afforded this foundational authority. This raises, among various implications, the validity of youthful 'disciples.' Indeed, the weight of Scripture's relevance resides in the reality that leaders within the church are 'shaped and trained by it.' Church leaders remain aware that such formative training will steer them towards a life of integrity, highly valued by the church community. Hence, the provision for a life of integrity (as depicted in 4:12) becomes intertwined with the execution of church leadership (4:13-16) (Thompson, 2017). The authority (4:12, 14) of those overseeing the church, shaping its principles, practices, and worldview, is intrinsically linked to the formation of 'individuals worthy (as defined by the text's values) of possessing such authority.'

The responsible formation of youth ministers further articulates the significance of 1Timothy 4:12-16. A judicious approach towards such young ministers must consider the theological implications conveyed within this passage – whether it inspires 22-year-old ministers to undertake critical roles or emphasizes the necessity for diligent oversight and mentorship (Thompson, 2017). Although our understanding of church practices congruent with Paul's strategies remains largely speculative, such uncertainty does not diminish the appeal offered by a contemporary theological analysis. For Dean et al. (2001), the youth minister is equipped with theological imperatives drawn from 1Timothy upon which to anchor their engagement. Accordingly, 1Timothy 4:12-16 emerges as a text of considerable importance in ongoing inquiries into its theological merits and their implications for modern church practices. The themes elucidated throughout ensure that there remains sustained and significant relevance for the church today.

Within 1 Timothy 4:12-16, the distinction between youthful age and the qualities requisite for church leadership is starkly apparent. This observation, according to Jong-Ok & Chung (2024) may prompt interpretations suggesting young individuals lack credibility and are consequently not taken seriously within a church context. Nevertheless, Paul does not advise Timothy to differentiate himself from an average young man within the community; rather, he implores him to exhibit maturity and responsibility through his speech and lifestyle (Woodruff, 2000). His youth should not disqualify him from leadership roles within the congregation, nor should it shield him from inevitable scrutiny. The cultural backdrop underscores this message poignantly: since elevation to the role of an "elder" often necessitated exceeding the age of fifty, transitioning into both eldership and leadership bore a clear age boundary that placed such roles well beyond youth (Ononogbu, 2016). Paul presupposes that the traits of leaders are applicable across all age demographics, and leaders should not be perceived as inherently more mature than the broader congregational body. This reality elucidates that the qualifications for leadership prioritize character over mere chronological age in the governance of the church.

According to Yaconelli (2003), the principles articulated in 1 Timothy 3:1-12, when extrapolated to encompass all aspects of church leadership hinging on spirituality and character rather than purely age-based measures, foster enhanced discernment and engagement among the young. This concept emphasizes empowerment for Timothy and the youth, equipping them with critical insights regarding godly leadership. Equally significant, utilizing 1 Timothy 4 as a passage of empowerment actively disputes any notions that reduce youth to mere targets of outreach, recognizing instead their potential as capable leaders (White, 2008). Youth leaders can serve as vital conduits between the community and the church, facilitating a transition from isolation to proactive engagement. Within this framework, youth emerge as proficient agents of empowerment within their congregational settings.

The Christian faith is fundamentally contingent upon the person and work of Jesus Christ. Root and Dean (2011) assert that the guidance that Paul extends to Timothy in the epistle of 1 Timothy is intrinsically linked to the preservation of the integrity of the salvation message, which finds its most complete expression in Christ. This underscores the critical necessity of ensuring that nothing undermines the unique and significant identity of Jesus: his divine sonship, his humanity, his life, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, and his sovereign authority to return as both judge and savior for humanity. However, a theological confrontation exists between the Christian gospel and various forms of heretical teachings, manifesting along several notable fronts. These fronts include challenges to the very nature of God, specifically aiming at his exclusive divinity, his invisibility, and his fundamentally non-specific or genderless divine essence. Furthermore, this contention encompasses a range of broader theological discussions regarding the Law of Moses and Israel's role in the greater Christian church (Ragira, 2017). An additional significant theme that emerges pertains to the exercise of authority within the Christian community itself. This involves practical recommendations concerning how to recognize and effectively utilize the gifts of both men and women in service to the community, alongside guidelines addressing attitudes and dress codes for both genders during Christian gatherings.

In addition to these ecclesiological and ethical matters, which are inextricably linked to ongoing theological disputes about the precise content of the Christian message, references to the resurrection of Jesus and the doctrine of his second coming, as well as dialogues regarding the nature of evil and the transformative power of salvation, collectively serve to counter any inclination to restrict religion solely to ethical issues and considerations (Chancey & Bruner, 2017). The outcome is a rich and intricate tapestry of theological issues, all expressed within the context of the practical problems and challenges that were prevalent in Timothy's Christian fellowship at the time this significant letter was composed.

This passage from 1 Timothy 4:12-16 underscores the importance of young individuals in leadership and service roles. It emphasizes youth in ministry, the Bible's supremacy, faith persistence, and the leader's role in redemption. It is important for young people to be examples as well as inspire others through trustworthiness and

spiritual commitment, and this chapter urges Timothy to be an example in speech, behaviour, love, faith, and purity. It also highlights the necessity for young leaders to be role models (Drury, 2001). Paul also emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and validating one's spiritual abilities through the laying on of hands and the use of prophecy. This act, a sign of divine calling and gifting, suggests that God bestows talents on individuals of any age with the aim of serving the Church. In terms of theology, this demonstrates the conviction that the Holy Spirit has an active role in the process of endowing persons with particular talents for the purpose of ministry.

Within the context of the life of the Church, the verse also highlights the essential theological function that Scripture plays, highlighting the significance of establishing the ministry on the foundation of Scripture. It reaffirms the authority of Scripture in directing and training Christians, and it teaches Timothy that reading and teaching Scripture is not just a tool for personal development but also an essential means for constructing and maintaining the faith of others (Drury, 2001). 1Timothy 4:12-16 has major theological consequences for youth ministry and leadership, as the end of this discussion will show. It places an emphasis on the significance of cultivating spiritual gifts, the authority of the Bible, persistence in faith, and the role of the leader in the redemption of others. These passages continue to act as a call to young leaders in the context of youth ministry today, encouraging them to have a profound relationship with their faith, to serve as a model for others, and to depend on the enabling gifts that the Holy Spirit bestows.

The structure of 1Timothy 4:12-16 displays a sophisticated theology of leadership and service, especially with regard to children and teenagers who are in positions of authority. Paul's focus on Timothy's behaviour, commitment to the Scriptures, stewardship of gifts, personal development, and persistence in teaching highlights important qualities of Christian leadership (Yaconelli, 2003). By utilizing these components, Paul teaches that the authority of a leader in the Christian community does not originate from age or prestige but rather from a life that displays Christ-like characteristics and a consistent dedication to the Word of God. Furthermore, the verse emphasizes the significance of community in the process of recognizing and rewarding spiritual talents from individuals. Paul's reference to the laying on of hands and the prophetic gifts reveals an ecclesiological framework in which the community plays an important role in providing support and guidance to those in positions of authority throughout the church (Work & Olson, 2014). Timothy's development, which is to be visible to everyone, hints to a form of leadership that is both open and responsible. It encourages participation from the general public and a way of life that is a clear manifestation of the principles found in the Bible.

## **PROSPECTS FOR EFFECTIVE FUTURE YOUTH MINISTRY IN ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF UGHELLI**

Paul encourages Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12 to not allow people to look down on him because of his youth but rather to provide an example in speech, behaviour, love,

faith, and purity despite the fact that he is still young (Clark, 2010). Youth ministry in Ughelli faces significant implications, as societal trends and influences that contradict Christian principles often exert pressure on young people. This command has enormous applicability. It is possible for youth pastors in Ughelli to put this passage into practice by encouraging young Christians to openly and publicly embrace Christian ideals. The Anglican Diocese of Ughelli may consider the following practical implications of 1Timothy 4:12-16 as a direction for effect youth ministry:

**Youth leadership workshops:** Youth leaders can conduct workshops focused on Christian communication in the field of communication training. These workshops should emphasize the power of words in uplifting people, and they should avoid using language that conveys negativity or discouragement.

**Youth pastors as models:** Youth pastors have a responsibility to model the qualities of love, patience, and respect they desire in their congregations. By exemplifying these principles, they provide a model that young people may look up to and model their lives after.

**Promoting purity and integrity:** The diocese has the ability to arrange seminars and discussion groups that will focus on practical strategies to retain purity and integrity in light of the moral issues that young people confront, particularly in regard to purity and relationships.

**Devotion to the public readings of scripture, exhortation, and teaching:** In verse 13 of 1Timothy 4, the apostle Paul exhorts Timothy to dedicate himself to the public reading of scripture, as well as to exhortation and teaching. The Anglican tradition, which places a significant emphasis on the reading of scripture and liturgical texts, can use this to connect young people more meaningfully with the Word of God.

**Reading and studying the Bible:** Establishing consistent Bible study groups in which young people are able to take an active role helps create a closer relationship with the scriptures. It is possible that this practice may inspire young people in Ughelli to develop a habit of reading and comprehending scripture outside of the context of Sunday services.

**Services led by young people:** Giving young people the opportunity to take charge of some aspects of the service, such as reading scripture, may create a feeling of responsibility and confidence in them. Through participation in active ministry activities, individuals gain an understanding of the significance of scripture in both public worship and in their own personal lives.

**Encouragement and exhortation:** Youth leaders possess the ability to foster an environment where young people can support and encourage each other, thereby promoting honesty, transparency, responsibility, and support within the community. Engaging in this activity strengthens a shared commitment to the Christian path.

**Identification and development of talent:** The diocese can organize talent workshops and spiritual gift evaluation programmes to assist young people in discovering and cultivating their God-given talents, whether they are in music, teaching, leadership, or service.

**Through mentoring programmes:** Through mentoring programmes, more experienced members or youth leaders may act as mentors to younger individuals, assisting them in recognizing and developing their talents. An experienced choir leader, for instance, could connect a young person with a musical talent and help them develop their abilities for worship ministry.

**Encourage young people to accept their talents:** Youth leaders should encourage young people to embrace their diverse talents and ensure they understand the significance of every role, whether in front of or behind the scenes, in God's work. In the context of the spiritual journey of young people in the Diocese of Ughelli, this message emphasizes the need to maintain consistency and practice discipline within oneself.

**Setting individual spiritual goals:** Youth leaders have the ability to assist young people in setting personalized spiritual goals that are attainable, such as praying and reading the Bible every day, and consistently attending youth fellowship functions. Through the application of deliberate effort, this discipline encourages progress.

**Encouragement of reflection and self-evaluation:** The diocese has the ability to add frequent moments of reflection in which young people evaluate their spiritual growth. This serves to emphasize the significance of self-examination as an integral element of the Christian journey.

**Recognizing and celebrating growth:** It may be motivating to acknowledge and celebrate the personal development and significant milestones of young people. For instance, having a youth service on a yearly basis to recognize both individual and group progress might serve as a source of motivation for others.

**Keeping a careful eye on one's life and teaching:** In verse 16, Paul encourages Timothy to maintain a careful watch on both his life and his teaching, with an emphasis on endurance. This education is essential to provide a solid basis for the young people of Ughelli, who may encounter theological ambiguity or beliefs that contradict each other. In order to educate young people with the ability to defend their faith against ideas or practices that are in opposition with their own, youth ministry programs may include theological training workshops. These sessions aim to help young people understand fundamental Christian principles.

**Encouraging integrity:** Youth leaders should emphasize the significance of connecting one's ideas with deeds. They should also emphasize that real Christian discipleship entails both orthodoxy (the proper views) and orthopraxy (the appropriate behaviours).

In general, 1Timothy 4:12-16 provides a basic strategy for youth ministry within the Anglican Diocese of Ughelli. It is possible for youth pastors to cultivate a generation that is capable of withstanding moral problems and having a beneficial effect on their communities if they encourage youth to set a godly example, dedicate themselves to scripture, maximize their abilities, commit to development, and maintain solid theology. All things considered, applying this text could help the diocese create a dynamic, resilient, faith-centered youth ministry that aligns with its goal and values.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are recommendations for effective youth ministry within the contexts of the Anglican Diocese of Ughelli:

1. Create comprehensive training courses for youth leaders to improve their competencies in mentoring, resolution of disputes, and program development. This can enable them to more effectively communicate as well as support the youth.
2. Establish efficient communication lines between church leadership and young members. Consistent input sessions and forums can effectively resolve problems and enhance engagement.
3. Develop inclusive initiatives that address the varied interests and backgrounds of the youth community. Activities must cater to spiritual, interpersonal, and emotional needs, guaranteeing that all youth feel acknowledged and involved.
4. Cultivate partnerships with families to establish a nurturing atmosphere for youth ministry. Facilitating workshops or seminars can assist parents in comprehending the church's influence on their children's lives.
5. Leverage technology to engage a wider audience. Leveraging social networking sites, the internet, and digital assets can augment participation and offer supplementary learning possibilities for youth.
6. Implement a framework for the periodic assessment of the efficacy of youth initiatives. Collecting input from participants helps guide future projects and guarantees their relevance and effectiveness.
7. Promote youth involvement in charitable work and outreach initiatives. This fosters a sense of duty and communal connectedness, reaffirming the church's position in societal advancement.
8. Incorporate dialogues on mental health throughout youth ministry initiatives. Offering tools and assistance for mental well-being can tackle significant challenges encountered by today's youth.
9. Offer direction and chances for young individuals to investigate diverse occupations and ministries. This can assist them in recognizing their passions and possible career trajectories inside and beyond the church.
10. Promote ongoing fiscal backing and allocation of resources for youth ministries. This is crucial for the advancement and viability of significant programmes.

By adopting the above suggestions, the Anglican Diocese of Ughelli can improve its youth ministry, tackling existing difficulties while cultivating a dynamic and involved youth community.

## CONCLUSION

The youth ministry of the Anglican Diocese of Ughelli encounters obstacles including constrained resources, inconsistent youth participation, and socio-cultural influences. Notwithstanding these obstacles, the ministry possesses tremendous prospects. Collaboration with community organizations, contemporary technology, and



mentorship can enhance participation and develop dynamic programs. By resolving these difficulties, the ministry may cultivate a dynamic youth ministry that promotes faith and encourages young individuals to constructively impact society. A strong youth ministry will enhance the church and cultivate future community leaders, while ongoing assessment and modification are essential for its significance and effectiveness.

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### List of Oral Interviewees

S/N	Name	Sex	Age	Status	Location	Date
1	Precious Akre	M	28	Youth President	Ewhu	2/11/2024
2	Oghenero Township	M	36	Youth President	Orhuwhorun	2/11/2024
3	Efi Okejie	M	34	Youth Secretary	Uduophori	2/11/2024
4	Augustine Ibikibi	M	36	Youth President	Ekete	2/11/2024
5	Otoka Emmanuel	M	38	Youth President	Olomu	3/11/2024
6	Prosper Etagbedavbe	M	38	Youth Chaplain	Udu-West	3/11/2024
7	Jonas Aruobaga	M	51	DFUP	Cathedral	3/11/2024
8	Emmanuella Ekokotu	F	63	ACM Teacher	Cathedral	3/11/2024
9	S.O. Ogu	M	40	Youth President	Ekete	3/11/2024
10	Augustina Muemufo	F	42	School Teacher	Agbarha	4/11/2024
11	Patrick Adogho	M	39	EXDYP	Ughelli	4/11/2024
12	Oke Gbakeji	F	38	School Teacher	Ekakpamre	4/11/2024
13	Emma Akpomreta	M	39	Youth President	Ughievwen	4/11/2024
14	Alex Odenema	M	43	Lecturer	Orogun	4/11/2024
15	O.F.L. Abiri	M	42	Priest	Olomu	6/11/2024
16	Osas Jehwe	M	36	Boys Brigade Captain	Ughelli	6/11/2024

