STAR Series

For Congregational Leaders

INCLUSIVITY

COMPETENCY: True **inclusivity** goes far deeper than surface-level welcomes and focuses on creating genuine belonging for the most diverse generation in American history. Learn to celebrate differences, address bias, stay curious, avoid tokenism, and understand intersectionality—all crucial to create genuinely inclusive spaces for today's diverse young adult population.

Beyond the Welcome Mat: Creating Spaces Where Young Adults Belong

1 ACKNOWLEDGE AND CELEBRATE DIFFERENCES

Today's young adults represent the most diverse generation in American history—nearly half of Gen Z identify as non-white, and they expect their differences to be recognized and celebrated rather than minimized. Unlike previous generations who conformed to fit in, this generation wants to be embraced for their differences, not in spite of them. Get to know your young adults through their stories and connections by asking about favorite traditions, college experiences, and childhood challenges. Avoid loaded questions and instead focus on hearing their complete story as individuals.

2 CHALLENGE YOUR UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

We all carry unconscious biases based on our life experiences—our brain's way of saving energy through pattern recognition that can hurt social interactions. Common biases include affinity bias (favoring those with similar backgrounds), confirmation bias (seeking information that confirms preexisting beliefs), and stereotype bias (making assumptions based on group generalizations). Recognize these tendencies in yourself and actively work to course-correct when making decisions about events, leadership roles, and community involvement.

3 STAY CURIOUS THROUGH INTENTIONAL QUESTIONS

Foster inclusivity by remaining open to new ideas and perspectives. Harvard's James Ryan suggests five powerful questions: "Wait, what?" for clarification, "I wonder...?" to encourage exploration, "How can I help?" to offer support, "Couldn't we at least...?" to bridge disagreements, and "What truly matters?" to refocus on core values. These questions require removing judgment and maintaining a positive, open tone to create meaningful conversations.



4 AVOID TOKENISM WHILE EMBRACING DIVERSITY

Tokenism—making minimal symbolic efforts to appear inclusive—can be hurtful even when well-intentioned. Avoid assumptions like expecting Black members to automatically lead Black History Month workshops, which puts the educational burden on underrepresented congregants. Instead, take initiative by organizing visits to locally-owned diverse restaurants or attending cultural events together as a group.

5 UNDERSTAND INTERSECTIONALITY

People experience multiple, overlapping identities simultaneously. As legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw explains, imagine an intersection where someone can be "hit" by racism from one direction and sexism from another—sometimes both at once. Recognize that your young adults are complex individuals whose race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and other identities intersect to shape their unique worldview and need for inclusion. Start with one area and keep learning—inclusivity is about effort and intentionality, not perfection.

s.t.a.r. FOR YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

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ROADMAP

Curriculum Domain, Competency and Task Constellations

STAR Domain:	Listening
Associated Competency:	Relationship building and Compassion
Associated Task:	Equanimity

STAR Domain:	Young Adult Leadership
Associated Competency:	Resourcefulness and Communication
Associated Task:	Recruiting

STAR Domain:	Faith Journey
Associated Competency:	Creating Trust
Associated Task:	Spiritual formation

STAR Domain:	Culture
Associated Competency:	Adaptability
Associated Task:	Embracing failure

STAR Domain:	Intergenerational Connections
Associated Competency:	Mentorship
Associated Task:	Generational literacy and Digital literacy

STAR Domain:	Community
Associated Competency:	Authenticity and **Inclusivity**
Associated Task:	Managing conflict

STAR Domain:	Church Leadership
Associated Competency:	Influence and Purpose
Associated Task:	Creating buy-in

STAR Domain:	Frameworks, Programs, & Events
Associated Competency:	Learning
Associated Task:	Sticky programs and Measure and assess