There’s a saying that “**young people are our future**”. How many of you have heard of that before? I’m sure many of you have or even have said it yourself. But personally I kind of disagree with it because I believe that **young people are not only the future, but they are also our present now.** They are here amongst us and we should welcome them and not turn them away. We should make every attempt to listen and understand to what is going on in their lives and what they have to say. Instead of turning them away, we should embrace them as part of the community. Young people are quintessential part of our community as much as they are of our churches as well.

According to a recently published report, the average age of the *Fortune 500* companies’ Chief Executive Officer is 58. Now, that might not surprise you as much, BUT amongst them, the five youngest CEO’s are all less than the age of 43. This was led by Mark Zuckerberg of *Facebook*, who just recently turned 33 and is currently ranked the 4th wealthiest person in the world with a Net Worth of $63.3B according to *Forbes* magazine. This was in 2016. I’m sure that number will continue to rise. In the political world, our neighbor north of the border - Canada elected their prime minister last year – Justin Trudeau who’s 36 and France also recently elected Emmanuel Macoon as their new President, who is just 30 years old. 30!!! Wow! Imagining being 30 years old and you’re the president of one of the more prominent nations of the world. Earlier this week, in the special congressional election in the 6th District in Georgia, 30-year old Jon Ossoff was running against the Republican in one of the most expensive and contested election ever. Even though he lost the special election, he vowed to continue to advocate for reform both within and beyond the current political structure.

Let us also not forget that there were also a number of women CEO’s and global political leaders. These are the up-and-rising powerful and influential leaders who will certainly impact the way we live and our future in the local and global communities.

But what about our church communities? Are we doing our part to empower and give our young people opportunities to step up into leadership? Are we given them the same level of trust and space to excel and succeed or to try out new ideas? Well, as I look back about one year ago this week, our national church – the Presbyterian Church (USA) for the first time elected two women to serve as co-moderators. One is in her early to mid 50’s and the other in her late 30’s. Believe it or not, this was HUGE in sending a strong commitment and direction in which the church sees itself moving forward in meeting the challenges of tomorrow.

However, in all seriousness, I think it is ever so vital for us as a church to consider who we are, as called disciples of Christ. When it comes to our demographic, where may our future may hold and where we may invest our time and resources in matter! **What does the Bible have to say when it comes to promoting and preparing young people into future leadership?**

To begin with, we shall look into how children and youth are being invited to be a part of God’s covenant of grace since birth. According to our faith tradition, we believe that our baptism (whether as a child or as an adult) claims our belonging in Christ. Child baptism is a sign of not only our dedication and commitment of the child’s life to God, but to affirm God’s faithfulness and guidance upon that child’s life. This covenant is a mutual commitment established between God and Abrahamas we read last week.

Through this covenant of baptism, God claims us even before we have the opportunity to respond or to reason as a child. Just as the Lord declared to the young prophet Jeremiah, in affirming his calling as well as ours today that ***"Before I formed you in [your mother’s] the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."[[1]](#footnote-1)***

In the Old Testament passage that we read earlier, we read about a young man named Joshua who was being commissioned to take over the leadership role of the Israelites from the legendary Moses. Joshua was about 40 years old at that time and boy, did he have a big shoe to fill, following the footsteps of Moses. But God equipped Joshua not only with military skill as a warrior, but also the wisdom and grace in leading and guiding the people as a leader into the Promised Land. Gotta give this young Joshua credit for his faith in stepping up to the challenge though.

On the other hand, we also ought to give some recognition to Moses for willing to relinquish some of his power and authority over to Joshua. This peaceful transition of power did not come overnight. It took years of preparation and training. Just as Moses was once a young prince in Egypt while earning the trust of the Pharaoh. But God had made it clear to Moses that Joshua was the one to succeed him. God commanded Moses to mentor Joshua and to develop him with the necessary leadership skills that he needs to be. One of the great tests of leadership is the willingness and ability to train someone for one’s own position. Moses knew that his time would soon be passed and he was willing to submit to God’s will to choose someone else to replace him. Moses got to choose and to train the person who will take over his job, as the leader of a nation. This showed a lot of grace and humility on Moses’ part about Moses, his leadership and his personal character and integrity as well.

Furthermore, as much as Moses was preparing Joshua to be the next leader of Israel, God was also preparing the Israelites to be God’s people and as a nation once again. These people have been enslaved for the past 400 years and have spent the last 40 years as nomads wandering in the desert. As a nation, they were not ready to move into the land that God has promised. How were they going to conquer the Canaanites. They were much stronger, bigger than the Israelites. They needed new strategy, new energy and strength in order to fulfill God’s plan for them. God knew all of this and that’s why Joshua responded by saying YES to God and to his people!

Moses represented the former regime, as he led the Israelites out of Egypt, while Joshua represented the new blood, the next generation, the new hope upon the horizon. In fact, Joshua and Caleb were the only two who were born in Egypt and set foot on the Promised Land. All the others were forbidden to enter and eventually died in the desert. Their children who were born in the desert were the generation that experienced freedom and saw the fulfillment of God’s promise to them.

Furthermore, in our story today, the people not only needed to be equipped militarily but also spiritually as well. No one can win a battle without consulting God, first and foremost. They must NEVER forget who got them there in first place…God!!! That’s why the priest Eleazar was called upon to affirm God’s calling to commission Joshua as the next leader of the Israelites. The people must honor their faithfulness and allegiance to their God, as the beneficiary of the covenant made between their forefather of Abraham and God.

Moses yielded his power and authority to Joshua because of his obedience. Moses was willing to pass on the torch of leadership onto someone who was much younger, with less experience no doubt, but with greater energy, insights, and enthusiasm. They possess greater hope for the future. There were still battles ahead in order to conquer those who were occupying the land of Canaan. It made sense for a younger Joshua to take over. Under the guidance of Moses, each day Joshua gained wisdom and competence as a leader. He eventually earned the respect and trust among his people as the next leader of Israel. He became the “shepherd among the lost sheep” who were wandering out in the desert.

Transition of leadership and power requires mutual giving and receiving. The leader who yields power must be willing to let go and embrace whatever that is to come, even if there may be a period of uncertainty and adjustment. Likewise, the new leader who takes over must be willing to learn and adapt quickly and also learn from the mistakes that they will undoubtedly make. The leaders must be willing to trust his/her advisors as well in order to make the best decision for the people and for the nation. We pray that God will equip us with all the necessary tools and resources we need in order to run this race. We need people like to be like “Moses” to serve as our mentors. Meantime we also need “Joshua” to step up and be willing to say YES in accepting new responsibilities. Letting go may be difficult but it is a necessary part of progress and trusting in God’s sovereignty and faithfulness.

In the New Testament passage that Joseph read for us earlier, we saw another example of transition of power from the old to the young. The apostle Paul was writing a letter of encouragement to his protégé disciple Timothy. Paul charged the young Timothy to *“train yourself in godliness by setting an example [to others] in* ***speech****, in* ***conduct****, in* ***love****, in* ***faith*** *and in* ***purity****. Do not neglect the gifts that God has given to you.”[[2]](#footnote-2)*

Paul was to Timothy, as to Moses to Joshua in this mentor/apprentice or even father/son relationship. In both relationships, we come to realize that the work of God transcends from one generation to another. Our time may eventually come to an end, but God’s mission continues and there shall be a succession of leadership and transfer of power that must take place. We must not waste the many gifts that God has given to us….these gifts include the gift of time, energy, diligence, imagination, and opportunity to serve God and God’s people.

In the same way today, when a young person who demonstrates various gifts and potentials, **we must not interfere with the work of the Spirit in his/her life.**  Who are we to determine whether someone is fit to serve or not? **We must not only encourage them, support them, and mentor them along the way, but we must also get out of the way**, **so that they can fulfill what God has called them to do in order to run their leg of the race.**

As Yogi Berra said, “the future ain’t what it used to be.” He’s right about that. The future will be better! The future is not what is to come, but is already here…standing before us today.

May all thanks be to God. In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Jeremiah 1:5* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *I Timothy 4:4, 12-14* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)