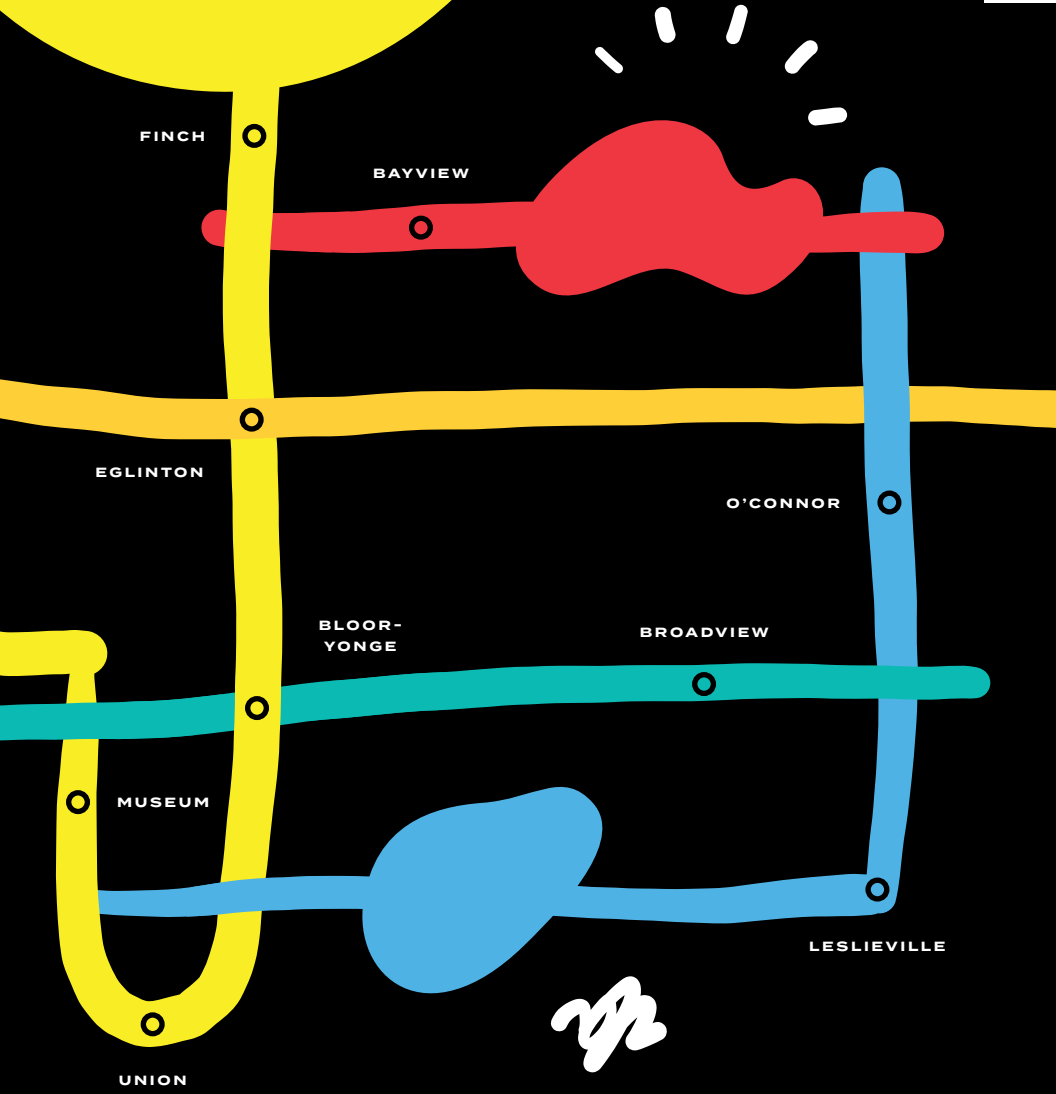


MAKING SPACE PLAN

STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2023



MAKING SPACE:



A SHORT STORY

Imagine that you've just been given a brand new, very expensive, & very stylish accent cabinet (the sort of thing you might put fine china in). It's a beautiful gift and you know that you want to keep it; but there's currently nowhere in your home for it to fit. You look around your kitchen, your living room, the hallway, and realize that if you're going to keep this cabinet you need to make space for it.

So how do you make space for something like this? What is required? You've already had to make mental and emotional space for it by deciding that you want to keep it. However, practically, this still requires creating physical space where there isn't any.

So what do you do?



1

You could buy a new home in order to enlarge the amount of space available; but that is probably not the most feasible solution.



2

You could shove it in a basement or garage, planning to use it “someday when there’s more space.” This isn’t a real solution either.



3

You could try to cram it into the current layout somewhere. However, this would probably leave your room feeling overcrowded and dysfunctional.



4

What is most likely required is a reconfiguring of the space that you have, letting go of the current layout, maybe even getting rid of certain other items, in order to create an environment that is built around this new piece of furniture so that it can thrive where it is. **This is what making space means.**



KEY MILESTONES & TRANSITIONS THAT GOT US HERE

So what, then, does 'making space' mean here at Youth Unlimited?

Making Space is, literally, our new four-year strategic pathway.

But, metaphorically, it means much more than that.

You might be wondering how we got here – embarking on this Making Space journey as we celebrate our 75th anniversary here in Toronto. Well, let's go back to the beginning...

DECEMBER 30, 1944

With a heart to reach the youth of our city and address their changing needs after WWII, Youth Unlimited (known as Toronto Youth for Christ then) launches its first large rally on Dec. 30, 1944.

1970'S

Alongside Campus Life school ministry, Youth Guidance emerges with an emphasis on building trusting, holistically-focused relationships with vulnerable youth.

2000'S

This ethos is imbued throughout our vision and work, with a thoroughgoing focus on investing in youth wholeness—spiritually, emotionally, relationally, socially, and intellectually.

2014

As a picture of God's transforming work in the lives of young people and their communities, the 5 Gauges of Transformation are developed: Rooted Identity, Renewed Character, Healthy Relationships, Joyful Service, and Clear Purpose.

2018

We enter a season of discernment for YU's direction in Toronto. At around 70 staff and over 60 initiatives, we knew it was a critical time for us to focus our collective efforts in order to address the growing disparity and challenges of young people in our city.

The fruit of this process is "Making Space", which we believe is our God-given guiding path for this season. It is a guiding path with four areas of focus.

OUR FOUR DIRECTIONS



INCREASING OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH VULNERABLE YOUTH.

We simply cannot ignore the disparities, inequity, and injustice facing young people on the margins each day – whether by virtue of their circumstances, internal struggles, or even where they live. By fostering transformation among these precious friends of ours, we hope to see their renewal bring hope and flourishing to every inch of our city.

INTEGRATING YOUNG PEOPLE INTO NEIGHBOURHOOD CHURCHES.

Furthermore, we know young people need to find a vibrant community of belonging that nurtures their faith and wellbeing for life-well into their adult years. We believe, too, that young people can breathe life into local churches throughout the city.

ACCOMPANYING YOUTH IN THE MIDST OF THEIR MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES.

Many of us are all-too-aware of this growing epidemic among young people, and it's a reality our staff grapple with in each of our programs across the city. Our hope is that no young person we serve would go through these struggles alone. We know it's imperative that we be a consistent, loving, and well-equipped presence for the sake of these young people's wellbeing.

LIVING OUT WHOLISTIC TRANSFORMATION.

Seeing young lives radically changed by personal experiences of God remains the heartbeat of Youth Unlimited. Transformed youth transforming our city is a vision born out of our "5 Gauges of Transformation" coming to life in the individuals and communities we serve.

CONTINUE READING FOR A DEEPER DIVE INTO EACH OF THESE DIRECTIONS.

VULNERABLE YOUTH



THE IMPACT WE HOPE TO SEE:

- We will intentionally increase our engagement with vulnerable youth, with the hope that a growing number of these friends will experience holistic transformation.
- At YU, we define a vulnerable youth as a young person who is facing internal, situational, and/or systemic barriers that are likely to expose them to harm and/or prevent them from experiencing holistic transformation.

WHY ENGAGING VULNERABLE YOUTH MATTERS IN TORONTO TODAY:

- Our city has the most income inequality in the country. Between 1999 and 2016, net worth increased by a mere \$2,100 for the bottom 20% of our population and by more than \$600,000 for the top 20%.
(Vital Signs Report)
- More than 125,000 children and youth are living in poverty in Toronto. (Statistics Canada)
- 1 in 4 children growing up in poverty will remain poor as adults. That means, without intervention, more than 30,000 children will not escape poverty as adults in Toronto.
(Social Planning Toronto)
- While crimes are increasing city-wide, the highest crime neighbourhoods have more than 50 times the rate of crime as the lowest. (Toronto Police Service)
- Vulnerability also disproportionately impacts racialized youth. For example, in 2017, 53% of black students in Toronto were in university-bound academic programs as compared to 81% of white and 80% of other racialized students. Conversely, 39% of black students were enrolled in applied programs, compared to 18% of other racialized groups and 16% of white students.
(CBC News, Social Planning Toronto)

HOW YU IS POSITIONED TO ENGAGE VULNERABLE YOUTH:

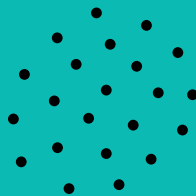
- Youth Unlimited has been working in vulnerable communities for over 30 years. Last year, more than 70% of the 1,314 youth we regularly engaged were experiencing vulnerability in some way.
- 31 of our 65 active initiatives are specifically designed to reach vulnerable youth, with many more intentionally engaging vulnerable youth.
- Our model of transformation roots us geographically in communities for long-term relationships – sometimes journeying with youth for more than 15 years. It is these relationships that change the narrative of vulnerability in our communities.
- We recognize the transformative potential of every young person knowing they are created for a purpose by a loving God. Communicating and sharing this hope allows young people to see their stories break out of the cycles around them.
- YU has over 165 partnerships, which are essential in providing comprehensive support to young people and their communities.

HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE:


- 1. Educate yourself:** Become aware of what vulnerability is and how it impacts you, young people, and our city. Try starting with Toronto's "Vital Signs" report!
- 2. Give:** Donate charitably to organizations making a positive difference in addressing youth vulnerability – whether individually, in communities, or systemically.
- 3. Advocate:** Reshape the conversation! In your sphere of influence, be part of changing the narrative about our city and those on the margins. Start by trying to eliminate any "us and them" dialogues with your peers.
- 4. Get Involved:** Find out what's going on in your neighbourhood or beyond and dive in.



YOUTH AND MENTAL HEALTH



THE IMPACT WE HOPE TO SEE:

- 
- We will intentionally accompany youth in the midst of their mental health challenges, with the hope that they feel well-supported and are better able to flourish.

WHY ADDRESSING YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS IN TORONTO TODAY:

- 70% of mental health disorders begin in adolescence, and 28% of students report not knowing where to turn when they wanted to talk to someone about mental health. (Across Boundaries/CAMH)

- This means, of the estimated 250,000 children and youth in Toronto experiencing mental health problems, only about 75,000 of them will ever seek help. (Across Boundaries/CAMH)

- Over the past 10 years in Toronto, hospital discharges for mental health and addictions as a percentage of all discharges for youth aged 15-24 have doubled, from 13% to 26%.

(Canadian Institute for Health Information)

- Wait times are as long as 18 months for the two most in-demand services: long-term counselling and intensive therapy.

(CIHI)

- “The average college student now reports as much anxiety as did the average psychiatric patient 50 years ago.”

(Escaping the Endless Adolescence)

HOW YU IS POSITIONED TO ADDRESS YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH:

- Our grassroots model puts us in and among hundreds of young people every day, allowing us to provide support and help to those who wouldn't otherwise seek it.
- As trusted adults in the lives of youth, we are privileged to be able to have those first conversations about mental health, and walk alongside troubled young people in the midst of their mental health challenges.
- We are deepening our expertise by providing training for all of our staff, and developing two specialized roles (counselor and referral consultant) in the area of mental health.

HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE:


- 1. Learn** to recognize the signs of those around you who might be suffering. If you are able, consider taking a Mental Health First Aid Course near you.
- 2. Help end the stigma** around mental health in your conversations and relationships.
- 3. Access** mental health resources like Tim Huff and Iona Snair's small, practical book "Am I Safe?", or Lifeteams' "Info Sheets on Youth Issues".



YOUTH INTEGRATION INTO NEIGHBOURHOOD CHURCHES



THE IMPACT WE HOPE TO SEE:

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- We will intentionally come alongside neighbourhood churches to engage in mission together, with the hope that all our youth will find a long-term place of belonging in vibrant local Christian communities.

WHY INTEGRATION INTO NEIGHBOURHOOD CHURCHES MATTERS IN TORONTO TODAY:

- In Toronto, social isolation for vulnerable youth is a consistent threat to wellbeing, with the risk of someone having no close friends being five times

higher for those with the lowest income versus those with the highest income. (Vital Signs)

- “For significant numbers of youth and young adults, churches are not places where they are able to ask questions about the content of their faith and how to live it out. Many youth and young adults are desperate to see communities of faith live out, both privately and publicly, what they talk about.”

(Hemorrhaging Faith Report)

- Nationally, it is estimated that 9,000 churches will close over the next ten years, yet we know that every dollar invested in a church creates \$4.77 of social capital for its community. That’s \$6.7 billion of social good in Toronto. (National Trust for Canada / Cardus Institute)

HOW YOU IS POSITIONED TO HELP INTEGRATE YOUTH INTO NEIGHBOURHOOD CHURCHES:

- As members of the Christian community in Toronto, we see ourselves as part of the broader 'Church' and are called to serve together.
- Given our entrepreneurial and community-focused approach, we can be a 'middle space' for young people, bridging the gap between the local church and the community.
- Our neighbourhood focus lends itself to neighbourhood partnerships, as demonstrated by the 66 active partnerships we have with churches today.
- We want to be the conversation partners for those desiring to see vulnerable youth find belonging and life-long thriving in churches.

HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

- 1. Be locally-minded:** What might God be doing in your neighbourhood and how might you get involved?
- 2. Develop** your own 'community triage' list: Know what services are available for vulnerable youth and others in your community.
- 3. Become** a 'middle space' person: Consider getting involved in a YU ministry to love and serve vulnerable youth.



LIVING OUT WHOLISTIC TRANSFORMATION

THE IMPACT WE HOPE TO SEE:

- We will intentionally live out wholistic transformation as team members together with our youth, with the hope that more and more young people will experience God's transformative work in their lives.

WHY WHOLISTIC TRANSFORMATION MATTERS IN TORONTO TODAY:

- From 2012 to 2017, the percentage of Toronto's students reporting low wellbeing increased by at least 29% for Grade 12 students (31% → 40%) and up to a high of 73% for Grade 8 students (15% → 26%). 2 out of 3 students (65%) who identify

as LGBTQ2S+ self-report low wellbeing. (TDSB Student Census)

- The average young person views 3,000 ads per day—not only contributing to obesity, poor nutrition, and alcohol and cigarette use, but pushing youth towards a one-dimensional, materialistic self-understanding. (American Academy of Pediatrics)
- Consistent factors present in young people's lives that contribute to them becoming involved in crime: experiencing trauma, chaotic/broken family environment, lack of relationships with non-family adults/mentors, negative peers, negative school experiences. (City of Toronto)
- Youth aged 15 to 34 contribute 29% of all volunteer hours in Canada (and make up 25% of Canada's population). (Statistics Canada)

HOW YU IS POSITIONED TO FOSTER WHOLISTIC TRANSFORMATION:

- While many organizations—often by necessity—only focus on a certain aspect of the individual, we always strive to invest in the whole of any young person, and believe their wholistic growth is of immense value—for them, and for our city.
- We believe a life filled with joy, peace, purpose, service, and love is what Jesus offers each of us, and so we share who Jesus is generously and graciously among the youth we serve.
- One of our main areas of focus is the wholistic growth of all our team members, knowing their personal transformation ties directly to the transforming impact they will have on the youth they serve.

HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

1. **Nurture** and **develop** a wholistic sense of your own self, using our 5 Gauges of Transformation as a guide.
2. Consider your circles of influence: How can you **bring a wholistic perspective** to counter the one-dimensional (namely, materialistic) narrative of our society?
3. **Look for opportunities** to turn this wholistic influence towards young people.
4. **Celebrate** and affirm the incremental transformation you see in yourself and those around you! Small victories matter.



RENEWED CHARACTER
Growing in Virtue



HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS
Seeking Reconciliation and
Vibrant Community



ROOTED IDENTITY
Engaging Life with Jesus



JOYFUL SERVICE
Putting Others First



CLEAR PURPOSE
Discovering & Utilizing
Gifts & Abilities

CENTRAL SERVICES



In order to have the impact we hope to see in these four “ministry directions”,

we recognize YU as an organization needs to bring adequate infrastructure and support to them. To that end, our Central Services team is committed to supporting Making Space in these ways:



1

EQUIPPING STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

We will intentionally provide training, tools and well-being support for our team members as they pursue: (1) Ministering to vulnerable youth, including those with mental health challenges, (2) church integration of vulnerable youth, and (3) living out wholistic transformation.

WHY THIS MATTERS...

Our people are the heartbeat of YU and their equipping is essential in order to navigate the complexities of the challenges facing today's youth. Targeted training will specifically empower them to implement the ministry directions of Making Space.





2

SPECIFIC RECRUITING

We will intentionally pray towards and seek to hire: (1) The necessary leadership roles to support our ministry direction; and (2) field staff, with special attention to: those in their 20s, those with a call to the vulnerable, those from diverse cultural and social backgrounds, those with an affinity with those served.

WHY THIS MATTERS...

In order to address the vast needs we hope to through Making Space, we need a significantly larger field staff and volunteer team! Our impact is always rooted in the trusting relationships our team members have with young people.



3

DEVELOPING EARNED-INCOME MINISTRIES

We will intentionally develop social enterprises to: (1) Provide transformative work experiences for vulnerable youth; and (2) Diversify our funding streams for ongoing sustainability.

WHY THIS MATTERS...

Formative work experiences continue to be an area of need for vulnerable youth in our city, and social enterprises can be a safe place for these youth to grow, develop, and transition into adulthood.



4

ENHANCING FIELD COLLABORATION

We will intentionally foster the sharing of our gifts, resources and expertise with one another to more effectively realize our vision.

WHY THIS MATTERS...

Simply put, we are stronger together. Putting the wealth of our knowledge, expertise, and resources into collaborative endeavours will better allow us to be effective in the midst of the increasing complexity of serving our city and its youth.



5

COORDINATING CENTRAL SERVICES ENGAGEMENT

We will intentionally steward the time of our team members by: (1) Streamlining central services processes, (2) providing supportive tools, and (3) engaging team members in a coordinated and unified manner.

WHY THIS MATTERS...

Everyone does better when they are in their 'sweet spot'. This focus will maximize the gifts and time of our field staff to do what they do best in communities throughout Toronto.

YOUTH UNLIMITED

TORONTO YFC

DOWNSVIEW
PARK

OAKWOOD

EGLINTON
WEST

OSSINGTON

SPADINA

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