

# Young People Turning to Prayer During Pandemic

A new study finds 39 percent of students say that during the coronavirus crisis they're praying more often (38 percent of high school students and 39 percent of post-secondary students), and 28 percent say they're thinking about spiritual issues more often (24 percent of high school students and 31 percent of post-secondary students).

The new poll commissioned by Young America's Foundation (YAF) in partnership with The Federalist reveals the impact coronavirus has had on the everyday lives of today's high school and post-secondary students.

Spencer Brown, a spokesman for YAF, told Just the News, "Young people often think about the big questions in life as they come of age and seek to find a purpose and a place in this world." The poll showed that nearly half of the post-secondary students find their futures upended. "When they seek solace and guidance, spiritual fulfillment is one such place they look," Brown continued. "That said . . . once things are good and lives are busy again, people are less likely to continue those spiritual practices."

Rev. Anthony Thompson, pastor of Holy Trinity Reformed Episcopal Church of Charleston, SC, knows well the effects of tragedy. His wife was among the nine black churchgoers murdered by a white supremacist in the 2015 shootings at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church.

"I believe that young people are far more interested in prayer and spiritual issues during the COVID-19 [crisis] than before," Thompson says, "because . . . all the things they depended on for security and happiness are gone, and with that so is their hope. I believe that young people are trying to

retrieve that hope in God.”

Christian author and journalist Billy Hallowell says that he was “not at all shocked” by the poll’s results since he has observed “massive increases” in online church attendance and professions of faith nationwide. “Whether young people stay committed to these newfound areas of interest remains to be seen, though I would speculate that at least a portion of these individuals surely will continue on that path once the pandemic concludes,” Hallowell says. “I think there are countless church leaders across the U.S. who are ready and willing to tackle young people’s concerns, and there are active efforts from evangelists like Nick Hall, among others, to reach youth.”

Former drug dealer Dimas Salaberrios is now pastor of Infinity Bible Church in the South Bronx of New York City, a church he co-founded with well-known pastor Tim Keller. Salaberrios assesses the situation this way: “COVID-19 has given America an authentic reset,” he told Just the News. “Young people have to look at their lives for the first time, and that level of self-reflection is driving kids to ask for help that transcends physical limitations . . . Kids are engaging in Zoom prayer, conference call prayer, and private prayer.”

John Luppo is a pastor who serves as executive manager for Strawberry Ministries, founded by baseball legend Darryl Strawberry. According to their website, one arm of the ministry focuses on “rescuing . . . youth from abuse, neglect, addictions, criminal behaviors, sex trafficking, and rebellious tendencies.” Luppo believes young people are more sensitive during COVID, looking to spiritual things to help them get through this. “This can be one of the biggest revivals of all time.”

—CARRIE SHEFFIELD, adapted from Just the News.