Coffee Hour Caution

...advice for older adults greeting young adults in Unitarian Universalist churches

- Avoid saying:
  “How old are you?”
  Why: Is age so important? There’s no good answer. Just avoid this one altogether.
  ✓ - Say instead:
  “What did you think of the service today?”

- Avoid saying:
  “Are you new here?”
  Why: A young adult may have been attending for years, you just haven’t met them. This implies you think they don’t belong in the church.
  ✓ - Say instead:
  “I don’t think we’ve met, my name is...”

- Avoid saying:
  “When are you planning to have kids?”
  Why: Having or not having kids is a private matter and not one people may want to discuss. This implies you only value young adults for their future children, not as a peer adult, here and now.
  ✓ - Say instead:
  “What brought you here today?”

- Avoid saying:
  “What do you do? / What year are you in school?”
  Why: For those who are un- or under-employed, work is a tricky question - and assuming someone is a student implies you think they are a certain age. Give them the chance to talk about whatever is meaningful, which might not be school or a job.
  ✓ - Say instead:
  “So tell me about yourself.”

- Avoid saying:
  “We need more young people!”
  Why: Like everyone else, young adults want to be seen for who they are rather than as a token for their age group.
  ✓ - Say instead:
  “Great to meet you!”

- Avoid saying:
  “Have you met our other young adult?”
  Why: Young adults enjoy friends of all ages. Welcome them into the community of faith and fellowship.
  ✓ - Say instead:
  “Can I introduce you to my friend?”

✓ DO: Introduce yourself • Make friends • Be interested • Reach out • Respect boundaries

Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Unitarian Universalist Association • uua.org/youngadults