

chapter five

A Congregational Toolkit for Becoming Intentionally Intergenerational

■ Jim Merhaut and John Roberto

■ *Every congregation can become intentionally intergenerational. There are dozens of ways that churches today are moving toward an intergenerational future, while still incorporating age-specific and interest-centered ministries and programming. This chapter provides an intergenerational toolkit of planning ideas and strategies to assist congregations in developing a plan for becoming more intentionally intergenerational in its life, ministries, faith formation, programs, and activities. The toolkit is organized around the five components of congregational life and includes planning processes and design tips. When these components are transformed through a commitment to building a culture of intergenerationality, they become both signs of and instruments for the full experience of the body of Christ.*

- **Caring.** Cultivating caring relationships across generations in the congregation and community, becoming a life-giving spiritual community of faith, hope,

and love through intergenerational relationship building in all ministries and programs, storytelling, mentoring, community life events, and more.

- **Celebrating.** Worshiping God together through intergenerational Sunday worship, engaging all ages in worship and leadership roles, whole community rituals and sacramental celebrations, milestone celebrations, and church year feasts and seasons that involve ages and generations.
- **Learning.** Engaging all ages and generations in intergenerational learning experiences that teach scripture and the Christian tradition, informing and forming disciples of all ages in Christian identity.
- **Praying.** Nurturing the spiritual life of the whole community through the congregation's prayer services, rituals, and blessings throughout the year that bring together all ages and generations and engage people in spiritual formation.
- **Serving.** Involving all ages and generations in service and mission to the world, especially to the poor and vulnerable, in caring for creation, and in the works of justice and advocacy through local and global projects.

These suggestions are not the only ways for churches to become more intentionally intergenerational but they do provide substantive ways to make this happen. These practices are already being implemented, in one form or another, in Christian churches today and are a starting point for a congregation to develop its own customized plan. As you strive to be as inclusive as possible, don't forget to simply *ask* people what would make each activity more appealing to them. Gathering input and honoring opinions will make your community more welcoming for people of all ages.

Important Connections

Connection to the Home and Daily Life

The ideas in the toolkit focus on equipping the congregation to become more intentionally intergenerational. Implicit in all of the ideas and approaches suggested is a connection to the home. When a congregation lives *caring, celebrating, learning, praying, and serving* intergenerationally, a natural connection to (extended) families and the home is established.

Congregations can utilize family participation in congregational life, ministries, and faith formation to teach, model, and demonstrate Christian values and faith practices that families can live everyday at home. Participation in intergenerational experiences helps to develop the faith of parents and grandparents and increases their confidence and competence for engaging in faith practices at home.

Intergenerational participation creates a shared experience—often missing from everyday life—of families learning together, sharing faith, praying together, serving, and celebrating rituals and traditions. Families learn the knowledge and skills for sharing faith, celebrating traditions, and practicing the Christian faith at home and in the world and they receive encouragement for continued family conversations at home. Congregations also have the opportunity to provide resources to help families share, celebrate, and practice their faith at home.

As you begin to incorporate intergenerational ideas into your congregation, be sure to connect the congregation with the home and provide ways for people to continue growing in faith with their family or household and community.

Connection to Online Life

We live in a world with an abundance of high-quality religious and spiritual digital content available in a variety of forms: online, apps, e-books, video, and much more. In the digital age, congregations can develop online digital platforms (websites) to extend and deepen intergenerational experiences by utilizing digital faith formation resources and by fostering social connections among people through social media. Congregations now have a way to connect with people and resource them in the daily lives. For example, a congregation can extend Sunday worship through the week using a variety of digital content that deepens the understanding and practice of the Sunday readings, sermon, and church year season. Digital content can provide prayers, devotions, rituals, a video of the sermon with a study guide, service/action ideas, conversation activities, and more. This example can be applied to each of the five components of church life: *caring, celebrating, learning, praying, and serving*.

The online digital platform provides a way to support people in their faith growth by providing resources and activities to enrich their faith and practice, and by connecting people to each other—all of which is accessible and available anytime and anywhere.

Resources

For online resources dedicated to intergenerational ministry and faith formation, visit **www.IntergenerationFaith.com**. This website includes articles, research, intergenerational programs, planning tools, and website links to congregations and organizations. It is organized around each of the five essential elements of church life: *caring, celebrating, learning, praying, and serving*. There are also examples of congregations that have built websites with online faith-forming content and activities that connect church events with people's daily lives.

Planning for Intergenerationality

The following process can be utilized as a churchwide planning process for becoming intentionally intergenerational and moving from ideas to action. It can be adapted to be used with one of the five components—*caring*, *celebrating*, *learning*, *praying*, and *servicing*.

1. Develop an *intergenerational task force* with leaders in a particular ministry or representing all of essential ministries of the congregation. Try to reflect the generations present in the congregation from youth through older adults on the team.
2. Have everyone read Chapter One and/or present the key research, vision, and blessings and benefits of being an intergenerational church. For additional articles and presentation resources go to www.IntergenerationFaith.com.
3. Conduct an *intergenerational audit* to analyze congregational ministries, programs, and activities that are already intentionally intergenerational and to identify the areas for intergenerational growth and development in those ministries and programs. Use the intergenerational audit worksheet on page 102 to guide your work. Then identify possibilities for creating new projects or activities for becoming intentionally intergenerational in *caring*, *celebrating*, *learning*, *praying*, and *servicing*.
4. Identify specific projects that the congregation wants to develop over the next three years to strengthen the intergenerational quality of particular programs or ministries and identify new projects in intergenerational ministry and faith formation. Review the intergenerational strategies and ideas in this chapter to stimulate your thinking and idea generation.
5. Generate ideas and strategies for developing each project. Create a project plan that includes a project statement: description of project, goals, and target audience(s) and develop a design: content, strategies, timeline, materials needs, budget, and so forth.
6. Present the plan to church leaders and the community. Make a solid case for the need to be intergenerational and the blessings and benefits that it will bring to the church community (see Chapter One). Share the plan, including short-term and long-term goals and projects. Invite feedback, suggestions, and ideas.
7. Develop an implementation plan that introduces each project in two phases. First, identify a group within the target audience for piloting or for a limited launch of a version 1.0 of the project in order to test its effectiveness. Implement the project with the target group

and get regular feedback on its implementation and effectiveness. This is an opportunity to develop leaders through the piloting phase so that they can be involved in the wider launch of the project.

Second, after piloting, evaluate the project and determine its strengths and areas for improvement and decide whether to move ahead with a wider launch of the project. Modify, revise, or redesign the project based on the evaluation and launch the project on a wider scale.

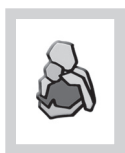
8. Continue to evaluate your efforts, but be patient. Each effort provides new learning that you can be used to continue to move toward becoming a more intentionally intergenerational congregation.
9. Keep innovating! Each year introduce new projects and programs. Don't be afraid to communicate the stories and examples of the benefits and blessings that are coming to the church community because of the intergenerational focus.

Resources

You can find additional planning tools at www.IntergenerationalFaith.com.

Intergenerational Audit Worksheet

Use the format of the worksheet on page 102 to develop a congregational audit that assesses the degree to which your current ministries, programs, and activities are already intentionally intergenerational and that identifies potential areas for growth and development. After you complete your audit identify possibilities for creating new projects or activities for becoming intentionally intergenerational in *caring, celebrating, learning, praying, and serving*. You might find it helpful to review all of the ideas in this chapter before completing the audit.



Caring

Cultivating caring relationships across generations in the congregation and community, becoming a life-giving spiritual community of faith, hope, and love through intergenerational relationship building in all ministries and programs, storytelling, mentoring, community life events, and more.

Imagine what your congregation would look like if it modeled itself after these biblical expressions of caring:

- “Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you” (Matthew 5:42).
- “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:44-45).
- “Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. . . . and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward” (Matthew 10:40, 42).
- “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

Caring expressions are a starting point and a sign of success when a congregation is intentionally becoming intergenerational. Churches can offer formal intergenerational programs to help members connect emotionally with each other across the generations. After years of working at these programs, church leaders report that they begin to notice spontaneous expressions of care across the generations. (See the research reports in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 for confirmation of this finding.) For example, teens begin initiating conversations with adults and children when they gather before and/or after worship services. The caring that was planned at the beginning of intergenerational programming becomes the spontaneous and natural way that church members treat each other intergenerationally as a sign that the Christian bonds of love have been warmly woven from young to old and old to young.

Expressions of care are distinct in that they tend to the emotional side of faith formation. We offer them because we feel connected to the other person, and we want, not only with our heads but also with the desire of our hearts, what is best for the other. Expressions of care create the warm emotional climate that is necessary for a person to want to enter into a relationship with God and a faith community.

Expressions of caring are often woven into intergenerational programs such as learning sessions or service experiences, but they can also take the shape of programs unto themselves. How can a congregational become intentionally intergenerational in fostering caring relationships across generations and a community life that expresses and nurtures caring?

Create a Welcoming and Inclusive Environment for Intergenerational Activities

When multiple generations come together for any activity, it is important to consider the needs of each generation and strive to be as inclusive as possible. Here are several things to consider when designing and conducting intergenerational experiences. Develop a set of guidelines that are specially designed for your congregation and your facilities.

1. Young children may have difficulty understanding the boundaries and expectations of a group activity. Encourage older group participants to be patient about answering their questions and assign “guides” to help model appropriate behavior. Give the youngest participants their own responsibilities, too.
2. Teenagers may no longer feel like kids, but adults may not see them as equals. It is important to offer teens respectful roles that fully engage them in an activity. You may even find that young people may make the best leaders for a particular activity.
3. Every group may encounter stereotypes, but misconceptions about elders being helpless are particularly likely to result in their being excluded from an activity. In general mature adults are in good health and want to be actively contributing to their church and community. Be sure to make use of the talents of the older participants in activities.
4. Parents may be so busy with or distracted by their own children that it is difficult to participate and interact with the rest of the group. Talk together about expectations and try to foster a group norm that supports parents and makes child care a shared responsibility. Find ways to engage children in separate activities while parents gather to share with each other.
5. Some people experience limited mobility or other physical restrictions, and sometimes these limitations are related to age. Be sure that your environment is safe and accessible for very young children and elders who may need special accommodations. For example, choose facilities with ramps for strollers, walkers, and wheelchairs.

(Adapted from: *Generators: 20 Activities to Recharge Your Intergenerational Group*. Jennifer Griffin-Wiesner. Minneapolis: Search Institute, 2005, 3–4.)

Engage in Caring Conversation

Become intentional about integrating opportunities for caring conversations across generations in all church life, events, and programs. Christian values and faith are passed on to the next generation through supportive conversation. Listening and responding to the daily concerns of family members make it easier to have meaningful conversations regarding the love of God, and are ways to express God's love to others. Hearing their parents "faith stories" is one of the most important influences on the faith of children and teenagers.

David Anderson and Paul Hill emphasize the importance of caring conversations when they write, "Caring conversations include more than simply telling our stories. At the heart of the communication recommended here is the sharing of faith, values, and the care of others. This can range from supportive listening, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with another, and simple praise and thanksgiving to challenging admonition, ethical discussions, and call to action on behalf of God's creatures and creation. . . . The story of Jesus and our life stories are woven together as one fabric that brings forth endless variety of caring conversation" (Anderson and Hill, 112–113).

Intergenerational conversations often get problematic when people assume that because of their age and they cannot find common ground with someone older or younger. Sometimes people assume that because of their age they are only in a position to give or to receive in the conversation; they do not expect the conversation to be reciprocal. Conversations in which people engage in listening and being listened to are the interactions that are most satisfying and memorable. Here are few conversation starters that can be used in a variety of settings:

- *What are you passionate about?* Share that. Show your passion. Be open and honest in both your talking and in your listening.
- *What are you curious about?* Don't be afraid to ask questions. Be curious and also be authentic.
- *Share your interests.* Talk about things you are interested in and share your thoughts.
- *Go out on a limb.* Both youth and adults share great diversity in social skills. Just be yourself. Start a conversation with someone you don't know. Enjoy your experience together. How will you follow up next time?
- *Just be together.* If you don't know what to say, just relax. Share from your heart. Don't worry about your age or how you look. Just engage in a loving way. See what happens.

There are a number of important practices to support caring conversations that can be embedded in every intergenerational activity and communicated to the participants. Among the most important practices are:

- creating an emotionally safe and nonjudgmental environment
- making eye contact to express honesty and openness in a conversation
- balancing the roles of speaking and listening so that everyone is heard and respected
- focusing on the interests of others
- providing and seeking feedback to create understanding among people

Congregations that succeed at intergenerational ministry understand the dynamics of caring conversations and build them into group discussions that occur within programs and activities. People are given guidelines that clarify how they can engage in meaningful conversations, and facilitators support these guidelines through their leadership.

Resources for Caring Conversations

Faith Talk Cards and *Faith Talk Four Keys Cards* from Vibrant Faith Ministries (www.vibrantfaith.org) provide ready-made questions that encourage meaningful conversation across generations.

Vibrant Faith @ Home (www.vibrantfaithathome.org) from Vibrant Faith Ministries provides caring conversation activities for families with children through adults.

God's Big Story from Faith Alive Christian Resources has 165 cards that include reading the day's story in the Bible and six ways to explore the story together.

Faith Conversations for Families by Jim Burns (Regal Books) provides faith-focused conversations on fifty-two topics.

Instant Small Group by Mike Nappa (Baker Books) and *Instant Family Devotions* by Mike Nappa and Jill Wuellner (Baker Books) provide fifty-two thematic activities in each book designed for caring conversations.

Nurture Caring Relationships

Intergenerational Community Building

One church recognized that it needed to create congregational opportunities for people to integrate into existing cross-generational structures. About six to eight times a year the church has Building Community Nights (BCN) after an abbreviated Sunday evening service. These events allow the generations that make up the congregation to naturally mingle over cookies, coffee, desserts, fruit, and laughs. The church also hosts churchwide meals on the church grounds two to four times a year that have the same effect. These nonthreatening settings allow congregants to form unforced relationships with like-minded people in the congregation. Unforced relationships result in genuine relationships where wisdom and service are shared amidst the corporate body.

Intergenerational Relationships in Existing Programs

Congregations can build intergenerational relationships by adjusting existing ministries and programs to create intergenerational relationships and by creating new opportunities for intergenerational connections. Age-group programs can be structured with an intergenerational connection, such as including interviews, panels, and storytelling with people of different generations within an age-group program. A program can incorporate intergenerational dialogues by providing opportunities for children and youth to experience the wisdom, faith, and interests of older adults through presentations, performances, and discussions. And then reversing the process and providing opportunities for the older adults to experience the wisdom, faith, and interests of children or teens through presentations, performances, and discussions.

Intergenerational Storytelling

There are a variety of ways to engage in intergenerational storytelling. Here are four examples to spark your imagination for how to integrate storytelling into your congregation.

Intergenerational storybook. One church recognized the power of preserving the individual stories of people and took on a book project *Stories of Grace* that told the individual stories of people in the congregation—stories of children, young adults, middle-age adults, and older adults. Each person was interviewed and asked to specifically consider the question, “Where are the handprints of God in my life?” The interviews were then edited and written in the form of stories. The book brought value to each generation, recognizing that everyone has a story that needs to be passed on to others.

Intergenerational interviews. Another church conducted a *Back to the Future* program in which youth and older adults engaged in an intergenerational conversation. The entire group was divided into small groups so that one to two older adults were interacting with about ten to twelve students. The older adults were given a list of questions the young people would ask, such as: What was it like for you to be a twelve-year-old? A sixteen-year-old? A person in your mid-twenties? What was your first car? What were the popular dances, singers, and actors of your youth? What did your classroom look like and who was your best friend? When was a time in your life when God started to make sense? How did you come to know Christ? Often the older adults brought their yearbooks, letter jackets, and report cards for the younger people to see. The young people asked the questions and simply talked with the older adult about dating, family issues, and other things of interest to them.

Intergenerational storytelling. StoryCorps, an independent nonprofit project whose mission is to honor and celebrate one another’s lives through listening, has developed a simple approach to intergenerational storytelling. Since 2003, tens

of thousands of people have interviewed family and friends through StoryCorps. By recording the stories of their lives with the people they care about, people experience their history, hopes, and humanity. Each conversation is recorded on a free CD to take home and share and is archived for generations to come in the Library of Congress. StoryCorps is one of the largest oral history projects of its kind, creating a growing portrait of who we really are as Americans. The heart of StoryCorps is the conversation between two people who are important to each other: a son asking his mother about her childhood, an immigrant telling his friend about coming to America, or a couple reminiscing on their fiftieth wedding anniversary. A congregation could easily use this one-to-one method with members of different generations in the congregation as well as with different generations in a family. Interviews could be recorded in audio or video format and become part of the treasury of the church, available on the church's website. To listen to stories and learn more about StoryCorps, including resources on developing your own storytelling project, go to www.storycorps.net.

Intergenerational digital storytelling. People all over the world are experimenting with the creativity and collaboration that digital tools make possible. Digital storytelling can be personal (telling your own story) or communal (telling the story of a community or group). With new digital tools, congregations can incorporate intergenerational digital storytelling in a variety of ways throughout the congregation from worship to learning to events. Digital storytelling at its most basic core is the practice of using computer-based tools to tell stories—combining the art of telling stories with a variety of multimedia, including graphics, audio, video, and web publishing. Researcher and digital culture consultant John Seely Brown described digital storytelling this way:

I'm particularly interested in digital storytelling, in new ways to use multiple media to tell stories and in the ability of kids, who are now growing up in a digital world, to figure out new ways to tell stories. They have the ability to build interpretive movies very simply and to lay sound tracks around the content. They condition or "sculpture" the context around the content. The serious interplay between context and content is key to what film—and rich media in general—are about. As one example, The Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS), a nonprofit, community arts organization in Berkeley, California, assists young people and adults in the creation and sharing of personal narratives through the combination of thoughtful writing and digital media tools.

The Center for Digital Storytelling developed "Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling" to provide a starting point for creating digital stories:

1. *Point of view.* What is the main point of the story and what is the perspective of the author?

2. *A dramatic question.* A key question that keeps the viewer's attention and will be answered by the end of the story.
3. *Emotional content.* Serious issues that come alive in a personal and powerful way and connects the audience to the story.
4. *The gift of your voice.* A way to personalize the story to help the audience understand the context.
5. *The power of the soundtrack.* Music or other sounds that support and embellish the story.
6. *Economy.* Using just enough content to tell the story without overloading the viewer.
7. *Pacing.* The rhythm of the story and how slowly or quickly it progresses.

One of the challenges in sharing stories is simply to begin to tell a story. How do you get started? Story prompts are ideas that can get your juices flowing and help you to think about a moment you'd like to share. Here are several story prompts in faith formation contexts (see www.storyingfaith.org):

- Tell a story about feeling God's presence.
- Tell a story about connection to a community of faith.
- Tell a story about a favorite scripture verse.
- Tell a story about a favorite song.
- Tell a story about feeling disconnected from a faith community.
- Tell a story about being angry with God.

Resources on Intergenerational Storytelling

Here are some digital tools to assist with the creation of videos:

Animoto (video creation), <http://animoto.com>

Audacity (audio editing), <http://audacity.sourceforge.net>

iMovie (video creation), www.apple.com

Here are several organizations that provide resources and tools to assist with digital storytelling:

Center for Digital Storytelling, <http://storycenter.org/stories>

Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling, <http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu>

Storying Faith: Digital Storytelling as Faith Formation, www.storyingfaith.org

Intergenerational Relationships through Mentoring

A mentor as defined by Webster's Dictionary is "a wise and trusted counselor or teacher; a loyal advisor." The concept of an experienced and wise adult passing on his or her knowledge to a young person has been gaining momentum in recent

years. Churches are finding that one-on-one mentoring relationships can become a way for love, care, and support to occur between the generations.

There are a variety of ways to become intentional about mentoring. Develop mentoring relationships between children or youth and adults, such as prayer partners, learning-to-pray spiritual direction, service involvements, and confirmation mentors. Link people of different generations (older-to-younger or younger-to-older) in the church who have insights and life experiences that may be helpful to the other. Examples are, mid-life and older adults helping young adults and new parents with financial management and household management or young people helping older adults navigate the digital and online world. One church connected adults who would meet weekly with graduating seniors for a few months. That limited time commitment created great success in connecting youth with faith-filled adult role models from the congregation.

Mentoring is a two-way street: the young can mentor the old, as well as the old with young. Look for ways to connect the gifts and talents of young people (art, music, skill with digital technologies) with adults in the congregation. Look for ways to connect young people with adults already engaged in leadership and ministry; adults who are engaged in community service can become mentors and role models by having young people accompany them in their service work.

Congregation social events provide an excellent format to nurture intergenerational relationships and introduce intergenerational activities. Sometimes the task is to infuse an intergenerational perspective and activities into an existing program, such as a Mardi Gras celebration, Friday simple meals during Lent, a church festival, or a churchwide assembly. Become intentional about community building by including introductions, icebreakers, and a brief community-building activity to help people get to know each other. Have one generation provide hospitality at churchwide events for all of the other generations.

Other times it may involve creating new programs for the express purpose of building intergenerational relationships, such as an intergenerational Olympics, a summer film festival (maybe outdoors on a large screen), a calendar-year event (Valentine's Day), or a church-year seasonal event during Advent or Lent or on Pentecost Sunday. These can be simple, one-time opportunities for all of the generations to get to know each other and have a shared experience of community. Make a concerted effort to invite people from all generations to plan these new activities.

One church initiated a new hospitality event called Welcome Home that is offered every summer for the congregation and surrounding community. The event begins with an outdoor Sunday liturgy in the church parking lot. Church members bring their own lawn chairs, but extra chairs are provided by the community as a sign of hospitality for those who forget or who "missed the memo." Worship is followed by a picnic lunch, some of the food provided by the parish as a whole and some provided potluck. Later in the afternoon there is a big dinner planned similarly to the lunch. All of the church committees and organizations

contribute to the event by developing an activity or offering a service that will enhance the experience. There are games for children, a performance by a Christian praise band, and free chances for gift baskets. The event is essentially an intergenerational church fair that focuses on celebrating the church's commitment to hospitality.

Another example of the power of a social event was initiated by one young person. It was a celebration of the arts with all the proceeds going to pay for a water well to be built in Haiti. The event featured many area bands donating their time, food booths offering their services at a discounted rate, bounce-around inflatables for children, and a dunking tank. Reaching the financial goal required more than \$5,000 in donations. The event generating enough donations to build three wells!

Works Cited

Anderson, David, and Paul Hill. *Frogs Without Legs Can't Hear: Nurturing Disciples in Home and Congregation*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003.

Online Resource Center

For more ideas, tools, and resources for Caring (building intergenerational relationships, storytelling, mentoring, and events) go to www.IntergenerationalFaith.com.



Celebrating

Worshipping God together through intergenerational Sunday worship, engaging all ages in worship and leadership roles, whole community rituals and sacramental celebrations, milestone celebrations, and church year feasts and seasons that involve ages and generations.

Intergenerational Sunday Worship

The epitome of a church celebration is the Sunday worship service. Liturgy, literally the work of the people, is the intergenerational stronghold in Christian history. Liturgy is not the work of *some* of the people. It is the work of the whole community, all ages and generations gathered to worship the one God who binds them together in unity. Even in the midst of the obsessive age segregation of the twentieth century, most churches did not abandon intergenerational worship.

All ministries flow from and lead to authentic Sunday worship. The weekly liturgical gathering of the faith community is a paradigm for all ministry. Gathering, proclaiming, communing, and sending forth in mission are foundational to all ministries. It is significant that we gather as a whole community. The Word is

proclaimed to the whole community; the breaking and sharing of the bread is for all and binds us together to be sent forth as the body of Christ for the world. Together we are a church, and being together is the fullness of who we are in all that we do.

One of the best ways to plan for intergeneration worship is to develop an intergenerational worship team with people of all ages represented. The team can be involved in preparing worship and suggesting ideas for more inclusive worship to preachers and worship planners. Team members can also be involved in variety of leadership roles at Sunday worship. Second, consider preparing your congregation for more intentional intergenerational worship by engaging all ages in intergenerational learning around the meaning and structure of worship so they can participate more actively in the worship experience. (See the next section on page 117 on designing intergenerational learning.) Third, the Advent and Lent seasons of the year are a great time to introduce new ideas for intergenerational worship. There are lots of great activities for congregational worship and for individual and family faith practice at home.

Here are several ideas for becoming more intentionally intergenerational at Sunday worship. Develop a plan for introducing these different elements into worship over the course of a year.

Create a Welcoming Environment

Create a worship environment that makes all ages feel welcomed and comfortable in worship. Greeters welcoming people as they enter the worship space communicates hospitality. Giving people an opportunity to introduce themselves to those close by and to meet others before or after worship further creates a hospitable environment. Develop worship aides that reflect the multiple ages of the congregation. Have child-friendly spaces and worship resources. Be sure to have comfortable space for older adults, as well physical spaces that meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Incorporate a Blend of Musical Styles

Integrate a variety of musical styles with some songs/hymns appealing to all ages and others appealing to the younger or older generations. Mix contemporary songs with more traditional music. The choir can be accompanied by keyboards, guitars, and drums to capture a musical style that is appealing to all ages. Involve young and old in leading music at worship. Perhaps a teenager who has a passion for sound technology can operate the church soundboard during the liturgy.

Involve All Ages in Worship Roles

Involve all generations, including children, in liturgical roles: reading the scriptures, leading a congregational prayer, conducting a drama or dramatic reading,

and more. Involve older children and teens as lectors/readers at worship. Invite all ages and whole families to be greeters at Sunday worship. Invite different age groups to bring visual elements or symbols to the Sunday worship. For example, have children and their parents create banners or murals for display that are reflective of the scripture readings or the theme of the Sunday worship. Have different age groups prepare and present the Sunday prayer petitions. Allow artists of all ages in the community to create art for the church environment, for the church year feasts and seasons, and more.

Be Interactive and Visual

Engage all generations with interactive and visual elements; involve all five senses of touch, sight, smell, taste, and hearing. Theological concepts and biblical stories can be abstract; allowing people to engage in biblical stories interactively and visually helps connect people's lives to God's word. Storytelling is a great way to engage people and connect a key point in a sermon to how people can apply it to their lives. Consider using short videos and multimedia at worship, especially if the videos and media are produced by members of the church community.

Make a Covenant

Congregations can develop an intergenerational worship covenant to help the whole congregation embrace all ages at worship. Theresa Cho describes the ideas this way:

It's not easy worshipping as an intergenerational community. Kids' noises can be loud and distracting. There may be parts of worship that you just don't care for. These things can focus our attention away from the wonderful benefits an intergenerational community brings. By making a covenant, where the church acknowledges the challenges and yet embraces the benefits, can be a wonderful resource to all. Here is the covenant that my church annually agrees to. It only takes one bad experience or dirty look from someone to ensure that the parent holding a crying baby never comes back.

“Covenant is a common biblical term used often between the Israelites and God. Covenant signifies agreement, promise, and commitment. St. John's is special in that we are intentional about nurturing a safe, open, real, and welcoming environment for all those who desire a comfortable worship experience and loving faith community. We are especially intentional about welcoming young families and children and recognize what a blessing their presence is in our worship. It is wonderful how comfortable our kids are at St. John's and how much they love to be there. Sometimes,

they may be too comfortable, which is why as a growing intergenerational community, it is good for us to remind ourselves how we can continue to go about respecting each other in worship.

“With the growing number of children as well as our children growing older and older each day, we covenant with each other to model for our children how to worship as well as allow our children to remind us to be open to the spontaneity of the Holy Spirit. Therefore as a community, let us covenant with each other the following . . .

“For the St. John’s Community:

- I recognize that being a part of an intergenerational faith community means that there are times, I must exercise grace, patience, and nurturing love.
- If the noises of children make it difficult for me to participate in worship at my comfort, I will choose to move to an area in the sanctuary that is less distracting.
- I will model how to worship in an intergenerational faith community by doing my part to provide a safe, open, real, and welcoming atmosphere.
- If I have any thoughts, concerns, and/or ideas, I will express those to the pastors or elders.”

(For more about the covenant go to Theresa Cho’s website: <http://theresaecho.com/2011/01/04/covenant-intergenerational-faith-community>.)

Resources on Intergenerational Worship

The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together edited by Howard Vanderwell (Alban Institute, 2008).

Intergenerational Christian Formation by Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross (IVP Academic, 2012). (See Chapter 14.)

“Intergenerational Worship” by Edward D. Seely. *Common Ground Journal*, Volume 6, No. 1, Fall 2008. (www.commongroundjournal.org)

Whole Community Sacramental Celebrations

Many sacramental rituals outside of Sunday liturgy have become family events rather than full intergenerational or whole community events. First communion, for example, is often celebrated with the families of children who are receiving communion for the first time. The rest of the community is either not invited or not encouraged to attend. Baptisms, the entry point into the community, looks more like a family initiation rite than a church initiation rite. The community

is only represented symbolically when it is just as easy to have them present both symbolically and physically. Intentionally intergenerational churches are always looking for ways to tie key religious celebrations into the fabric of the whole community while continuing to honor the significance of the event for the families who are celebrating a milestone for one or more of their members.

Many churches incorporate their first communion celebrations within regular weekend liturgies. Families are welcome to select any of the weekend liturgies for their child's ceremony. Some churches have even offered the option of allowing individual families to celebrate first communion at any weekend liturgy during the long seven-week season of Easter. It allows for the possibility of only a few children to receive first communion at a time. This model highlights the connection between Easter and initiation. It also gives the whole community many opportunities to affirm their younger members while it gives younger members many opportunities to display the wonder of childlike faith to the rest of the community. Baptisms are also being celebrated more and more as a part of the Sunday liturgy. Private family celebrations are being transformed into intergenerational celebrations. The whole community is present to welcome its newest member.

One resource that offers six intergenerational learning experiences around sacramental celebrations is *Celebrating Sacraments—People of Faith Series* by Mariette Martineau, Leif Kehrwald, and Joan Weber. (Our Sunday Visitor Curriculum).

Milestones throughout Life

Milestones are significant moments in life's journey that provide the opportunity for people of all ages to experience God's love and grow in faith through sacred and ordinary events both in the life of the congregation and in daily life. Faith formation around milestones, sacramental celebrations, and life transitions provides another way that congregations can be intentionally intergenerational—engaging the whole community in the celebration of the milestone, promoting the spiritual and faith growth of all ages, enhancing family faith practice at home, and strengthening people's engagement in the church community. Potential milestone celebrations include:

Congregational milestones. Baptism, welcoming young children to worship, first communion, presentation of Bibles, confirmation, marriage, funerals, sending people on mission trips, and much more.

Lifecycle milestones. Entering a new stage of schooling, graduations (middle school, high school, college, or graduate school), getting a driver's license, leaving home for college or the military, first home or apartment, new career or job, moving, retirement, death of a family member, and much more.

Annual milestones. Birthdays, anniversaries, start of the school year (e.g. blessing backpacks), seasons of the church year (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week), and much more.

Many churches create a lifelong plan for milestones. Each milestone is an opportunity for an intergenerational celebration and learning, and at-home faith formation. (For more on milestone and congregational examples go to the Faith Formation Learning Exchange: www.faithformationlearningexchange.net/milestones-through-life.html.)

Each milestone incorporates intergenerational components at home and church:

- a ritual celebration or a blessing marking the milestone with the whole church community
- a home ritual celebration or blessing marking the milestone
- a learning program, for the individual and the family, that prepares them for the milestone and its significance for their life and faith
- a tangible, visible reminder or symbol of the occasion being marked, given by the church community
- people and resources to support continuing faith growth and practice after the milestone

Resources for Milestones

Faith Stepping Stones, Faith Inkubators (www.faithink.com).

Family Faith Celebrations (Group, 2010).

Shift—What It Takes to Finally Reach Families Today by Brian Haynes (Group, 2009).

Celebrating the Milestones of Faith: A Guide for Churches, Keeley, Laura and Robert J. Keeley (Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2009).

Milestones Ministry Manual for Home and Congregation (Vibrant Faith Ministries, 2007).

Church Year Feasts and Seasons

The church year feasts and seasons provide a natural way to become intentionally intergenerational. Many congregations conduct intergenerational church year festivals in conjunction with or preparation for the liturgical seasons such as Advent, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, All Saints and All Souls, and more. Each festival is an integration of experiential learning, praying, ritual, and community life (see the Learning section on page 117 for an outline of a design process).

Intergenerational interactive activity centers, connected to Sunday worship and the church year, provide an opportunity for people to encounter their faith in a way that is tangible, meaningful, experiential, and reflective. Theresa Cho writes:

We began offering interactive prayer stations on certain Sundays as a way to engage in God's word and intentionally connect with our faith in tangible ways. We've been offering these opportunities for four years now, and it is a great way to offer worship that is intergenerational, reflective yet active, and creative. The sermon time is used to set up the focus of the

prayer stations. Then, in place of what would normally be “prayers of the people,” we invite people to participate in any or all of the prayer stations at their leisure. Because all ages can participate, we don’t offer Sunday school on Interactive Sundays. This gives families a wonderful opportunity to worship together and engage in faith conversations. Planning the interactive prayer stations has also been a wonderful opportunity to engage our confirmation kids as well as those who are interested in using their creative gifts for the church.

(Still Waters blog, <http://theresaecho.com/2010/11/09/interactive-prayer-stations.>)

As one example, activity centers for Advent can include stations for creating an Advent wreath, decorating a Jesse tree to take home, reading children’s story books on the nativity, singing Advent songs, and much more. Congregations can utilize interactive activity centers before or after Sunday worship or create a seasonal festival with a variety of learning stations.

Resources for Church Year Activities

Growing Together: Four downloadable volumes of eight intergenerational celebrations: *Sacred Celebrations for Fall & Winter*, *Sacred Celebrations for Spring & Summer*, *Secular Celebrations for Fall & Winter*, and *Secular Celebrations for Spring & Summer* (Church Publishing/Morehouse Education Publishing).

Following Jesus (six intergenerational church year intergenerational learning experiences) by John Roberto (Our Sunday Visitor Curriculum).

Loyola Press Intergenerational Resources: www.loyolapress.com/parish-ministry-intergenerational-catechesis.htm.

Online Resource Center

For more ideas, tools, and resources for Celebrating (intergenerational worship and rituals, milestones, and church year) go to www.IntergenerationalFaith.com.



Learning

Engaging all ages and generations in intergenerational learning experiences that teach scripture and the Christian tradition, informing and forming disciples of all ages in Christian identity.

James W. White offers what has become the guiding definition of intergenerational religious education: “two or more different age groups of people in a religious community together learning/growing/living in faith through in-common

experiences, parallel learning, contributive-occasions, and interactive sharing” (White, 18). White explains that an ideal intergenerational program will have all four patterns of relationships: in-common experiences, parallel learning, contributive-occasions, and interactive sharing. Intergenerational learning programs can be developed in many different formats such as large group and small group intergenerational learning programs, intergenerational summer camp program or vacation Bible school, intergenerational Sunday school or Bible study, intergenerational retreats, and intergenerational workshops.

Congregations are becoming intentionally intergenerational by incorporating intergenerational learning into their lifelong faith formation plan. Intergenerational learning provides a way to educate the whole community, bringing all ages and generations together to learn with and from each other. Intergenerational learning integrates learning, building community, sharing faith, praying, celebrating, and practicing faith. The key point is that everyone is learning together—young and old, single and married, families with children and empty-nest families. And it involves the whole family in a shared learning experience.

Intergenerational Learning Design

James White’s four patterns of relationships have become the basic pattern of intergenerational learning experiences: (1) in-common experiences, (2) parallel learning, (3) contributive-occasions, and (4) interactive sharing. Most churches design their intergenerational learning programs using these four movements, adapting the process to fit their particular needs.

In-common Experiences

Intergenerational religious education begins with a multigenerational experience of the theme that all the generations share together. In-common experiences of generations are usually less verbal and more observatory than in the other three elements. In this pattern there is something “out there” or “over there” for us to see or do, something that equalizes the ages. Thus, at the same time and place and in a similar manner, different-aged people listen to music or sing, make an art project, watch a video, hear a story, participate in a ritual, pray together, and so on. In-common experiences for the most part remain at what Jean Piaget calls the “concrete operational” level, where all can learn together.

Shared experiences are absolutely critical for building intergenerational learning. They are the stuff by which other patterns of relationships are built. To the point, Fred Rogers, of television’s *Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood*, makes the case for what is prescribed here when he asks rhetorically, “How can older and younger people respond to each other if they have no experiences together?”

Parallel Learning

Parallel learning is the second major intergenerational relational pattern. With it the generations are separated in order to work on the same topic or project, but in different ways at a “best fit” development, interest, or skill level. Some of the developmental levels we are talking about are cognitive, psychological, physical, moral, valuational, and so on—all the ways that make people different and special.

Though age groups may be separated, each one is focusing on the same learning task or topic. One of the major criticisms of intergenerational learning is “the tendency to view equality or persons across the age spectrum with uniformity of experience,” with that experience only from the vantage point of the child. By engaging in parallel learning, however, this shortcoming is avoided.

Contributive-occasions

The third pattern of learning is that of contributive-occasions. These occasions are often the step after parallel learning. What is involved is a coming together of different age groups or classes for the purpose of sharing what has been learned or created previously. The joining or rejoining becomes a contributive-occasion where separated pieces to a whole are added together for everyone’s benefit.

Contributive-occasions are more participatory than the other three patterns. If the contributions come from a previous period of parallel learning, the last part of that parallel learning would have been concerned with how to communicate acquired insights or behaviors to other age groups. By engaging “in mutual contribution” to one another, learners discover that the educational whole is great than the sum of its parts.

Interactive Sharing

Interactive sharing is the fourth major pattern in intergenerational relationships. It is a distinctive style or way of learning. Here persons are provided with an opportunity for interpersonal exchange, which may involve experiences or thoughts or feelings or actions. At its best, interactive sharing facilitates a “crossing over” to hear and respond to another’s perspective.

In an ideal intergenerational program or event, all four of the patterns of relationships will be enacted. People come together and have an in-common experience. Then they break to separately investigate the common subject at a level appropriate for their highest learning abilities. They come back together to present their insights and work in a shared program. Finally, different generations interact with one another, giving and receiving in the exchanges. In the latter case the participants are sharing, reflecting, debating, and dreaming from the side of the other but for their own edification (White, 26–30).

Intergenerational Methods

Intergenerational learning incorporates a variety of methods, approaches, and activities that actively engage people in the learning process and respond to their different ages and learning styles. Specifically, intergenerational learning programs:

1. **Respect the variety of learning styles** among the participants with a diversity of learning experiences, recognizing that some people learn best through direct, hands-on, concrete experiences; some through reflective observation; some through an exploration and analysis of knowledge, theories, and concepts; and others through active experimentation with the new knowledge and practices. (For further information see *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, David Kolb, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984.)

2. **Recognize the multiple intelligences** among the participants and design learning methods and activities that address the variety of intelligences in the group. Incorporating learning activities that teach to the different intelligences provides different ways for people to learn or “know” a particular concept, Bible story, or belief. While not every program can incorporate activities for all eight intelligences, having a greater variety of ways to learn promotes more effective learning and engages people of all ages more fully in the learning experience. The multiple intelligences identified by Howard Gardner include:
 - verbal-linguistic (word smart, book smart)
 - logical-mathematical (number smart, logic smart)
 - visual-spatial (art smart, picture smart)
 - bodily-kinesthetic (body smart, movement smart)
 - musical-rhythmic (music smart, sound smart)
 - naturalist (nature smart, environment smart)
 - interpersonal (people smart, group smart)
 - intrapersonal (self smart, introspection smart)

(For further information see the work of Howard Gardner and the book *7 Kinds of Smart: Identifying and Developing Your Many Intelligences* by Thomas Armstrong.)

3. **Utilize as many of the five senses as possible** where people can see, taste, smell, touch, and hear things related to the topic of the session. Each of our senses can provide a means of experiencing the world and engage in holistic learning. Children do this with intuitive ease, but adults can be helped to rediscover the power of the five senses in a learning experience. This process is often easier for adults in an intergenerational context. Immersing people in images and the visual nature of learning is especially

important in an image-driven culture. Younger generations hear with their eyes. Images, art, and film are integral to effective learning today.

4. **Encourage participation** of all participants, while at the same time ensuring that people are not coerced into situations in which they feel too high a level of discomfort. There is a need to balance activities based on cognitive/abstract thought processes on one hand and affective/concrete processes on the other. Learning programs need to provide for meaningful, nonthreatening interaction between people across the generational barriers. Build in collaborative learning where people can work together on projects and activities, and present what they are learning to the whole community.
5. **Incorporate real-life application** by engaging people in practicing and performing what they are learning by incorporating real-life application activities in the learning experience. Practice is a part of the learning process, not the result of it. Intergenerational learning helps people apply their learning to daily living as Christians. During the sessions participants experience new ways to practice their faith that promote the transfer of learning from the session to their daily lives as individuals and families.
6. **Utilize participants' experience and prior knowledge they bring to the session.** Participants need the opportunity to build on their knowledge, as well as to learn from each other.

Intergenerational Learning Models

Churches tend to implement intergenerational learning in one of two approaches: (1) as their core faith formation program for all ages, supplemented by age-specific and affinity group faith formation models or (2) as one element in their lifelong approach with age-specific and affinity group learning.

In the first approach churches make the intergenerational learning program their core faith formation program for all ages with weekly or monthly programs as their core experience and then offering a variety of age-group or affinity-group programs throughout the month. They have replaced or modified their age-group programming, such as Sunday school, to place an emphasis on all ages learning together. They develop a multiyear curriculum for the whole community that can include themes from the Bible, the cycle of Sunday lectionary readings, church year feasts and seasons, Christian practices, service and social justice, prayer and spiritual disciplines, core Christian beliefs, and moral teachings.

In the second approach intergenerational learning can take a variety of forms, such as an all-ages workshop, a whole-congregation Bible study, and all-ages conversations after Sunday worship focused on the scripture readings and sermon. Churches have also added an intergenerational learning component to a vacation Bible school or summer program. They take the theme from the summer program

and offer an intergenerational program on that same theme for the whole community, engaging the parents and grandparents in learning around the same content as the children have experienced. Churches also use intergenerational learning to prepare the community for a new liturgical year and the lectionary readings, for particular church year feasts and seasons (Advent–Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost), and for churchwide events, such as stewardship Sunday.

One model of intergenerational learning, developed through the Generations of Faith project and being used by hundreds of churches, begins with an All-ages Learning Experience (intergenerational); moves to an In-depth Learning Experience (age-specific or intergenerational) taught in one of three formats: age group, whole group, or learning activity centers; and concludes by Sharing Learning Reflections and Preparing for Practice (intergenerational). An outline of a learning program with these movements follows:

1. Hospitality and Meal
2. Gathering and Opening Prayer
3. All-ages Learning Experience: intergenerational learning begins with a multigenerational experience of the theme that all the generations share together
4. In-depth Learning Experience: through structured learning activities each generation—families with children, adolescents, and adults—explores the biblical and theological understanding of the topic, using one of three possible formats:
 - The *Age Group Format* provides parallel, age-appropriate learning for groups at the same time. Though age groups are separated, each one is focusing on the same topic—utilizing specific learning activities that are designed for their life cycle stage: families with children or children alone, adolescents, young adults, and adults.
 - The *Whole Group Format* provides a series of facilitated learning activities for everyone at the same time using intergenerational or age-specific small groups or table groups.
 - The *Learning Activity Center Format* provides structured intergenerational and age-specific learning activities at a variety of stations or centers in a common area.
5. Sharing Learning Reflections and Preparing for Practice: in intergenerational groups participants share what they learned and prepare for applying their learning to daily life using resources and activities provided in print or online
6. Closing Prayer Service

Resources

For examples of intergenerational programs using this learning model go to www.IntergenerationalFaith.com. and consult the resources at the end of this section on page 131.

Weekly Intergenerational Learning Models

The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Rapid City, South Dakota, offers a weekly intergenerational faith formation program. The congregation switched from a monthly program to a weekly program at the end of 2012 and was surprised to discover that average attendance increased significantly. The average attendance increased from 160 with the monthly program to 250 with the weekly offering. The staff reports that the people are thrilled with the weekly program. The program is offered on Wednesday evening and begins with supper at 5:30 p.m. At 6:15 age groups are formed: preschool, grades K-1, grades 2-3, grades 4-5, grades 6-8, high school, and adult.

The program uses Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, a Montessori faith formation program, for the preschool group. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd can be developed for children up to middle school, but this particular church only uses the preschool materials. All of the elementary, middle school, and high school materials are based upon the Life Teen program (<http://catholicyouthministry.com>) with adaptations of the middle school and high school programs for younger children. This kind of flexibility and creativity is a hallmark of many successful intergenerational practitioners. Linda Baldwin, the program director, claims that her presenters are far more focused, creative, and prepared because they don't use textbooks. The lack of a book challenges all of them to work harder and prepare better for their learning sessions. They see this as a definite advantage in their program.

The adults at Our Lady of Perpetual Help have two options. They can attend a lectionary-based Bible study or they can participate in a themed-based learning session. The Bible study existed before the intergenerational program and is now connected to the new weekly format as an additional option for adults.

All of the groups have a short prayer experience at the end of their sessions and they sometimes gather the adults with the high school teens for this. All of the age groups, along with some other church members, gather together at 7:30 p.m. to close the evening with a liturgy.

St. Patrick Church in Fayetteville, North Carolina, designed a weekly lectionary model that has been used successfully for eighteen years. The emphasis of the program is reflection on the prior Sunday's readings (rather than preparation) and is scheduled on Wednesday evenings from 7:00 p.m.–8:30 p.m. Nursery services are provided for children under four years of age. It opens with a well-planned experience of the Liturgy of the Word from the previous Sunday. The Liturgy of the Word is led by a member of the parish staff (pastor, deacon, or lay staff on a rotating basis) and includes a homily and reflective comments by the

leader. This is followed by breakout sessions with age-specific groups. Then the groups return and report back to the large group and close with a prayer. Here is the model in outline form:

1. Gather
2. Liturgy of the Word from previous Sunday: opening prayer, first reading, psalm, second reading, gospel acclamation, gospel reading, homily, profession of faith (creed), and prayers of the faithful
3. Breakout session for reflection and learning: preschool, primary grades, intermediate grades, teens, and adults
4. Gather in large group for feedback
5. Closing prayer

A study was conducted on the effectiveness of the program for the participating children. The ACRE assessment (Assessment of Catechesis/Religious Education) was used as the instrument to measure learning outcomes for children in intergenerational learning and in the Catholic school. While the Catholic school children scored slightly higher than the parish program children, the researcher found no significant difference between the scores even though the parish children were only meeting for formal catechesis thirty to thirty-five times per year for ninety minutes with a significant portion of the time spent in prayer. Intergenerational models are founded upon the widely accepted principle that parents are the most powerful faith formation agents in the life of a child. The presence of parents in this program proved to be very significant for the learning and faith growth of the children.

One possible adaptation of this model would be to focus the midweek learning session on the scripture readings for the upcoming Sunday. This type of program can begin with a reflection on how the previous Sunday's readings are influencing their lives during the week, followed by the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word for the upcoming Sunday (see format above). Then a learning session on the upcoming Sunday's readings would prepare participants for participation in Sunday worship *and* for the reflection time at the following week's intergenerational session. This approach accentuates the situating of Sunday worship in the center of the faith formation program, philosophically and programmatically. Here is how it looks in outline form:

1. Gathering, hospitality, and icebreaker
2. Reflection session on last Sunday's readings being applied in the lives of participants featuring: witness talks, small group sharing, large group feedback

3. Liturgy of the Word from previous Sunday: opening prayer, first reading, psalm, second reading, gospel acclamation, gospel reading, homily, profession of faith (creed), and prayers of the faithful
4. Core content session on the themes that emerge from the readings and the prayers of the liturgy using presentation with audio/visual accents, small group work in family groups or age-specific groups or at learning centers, and large group feedback
5. Application plan including brief presentation on possible application ideas, small group work to generate application ideas, and a commitment ceremony to motivate participants to go out and apply what was learned
6. Closing prayer and song taken from upcoming liturgy

LOGOS is GenOn Ministries (www.genonministries.org) weekly intergenerational experience for children and/or youth that creates an intentional arena where all ages, together, can learn about and practice the art of Christian relationships. In these cross-generational gatherings, everyone eats together, plays together, studies together, and prays together. LOGOS is applicable to churches of any size, denomination, ethnic group or mix, or geographical setting. LOGOS works by creatively using church facilities with staggered schedules and rotations, and using spaces not ordinarily thought of for classrooms and recreation areas, depending on program size. Most churches allow for 2.5–3.5 hours for the program, taking into consideration school schedules, current church activities, and enough time for relationship building in each of the four parts.

While Bible study, recreation, a shared meal, and worship skills all are meaningful parts when done alone, putting them together in one arena increases their effectiveness. These four parts, plus weekly congregational worship, make up the whole, providing everyone involved a cross-generational arena in which to have a complete, holistic experience of Christian nurture. In addition, young people will also lead in congregational worship on a regular basis.

The four-part weekly format includes:

1. Bible study: A time for each grade or a combination of grades to study the Bible as the model for Christ-centered living. Churches can use a non-denominational curriculum developed by GenOn for LOGOS or their own curriculum.
2. Worship skills: Choir, drama, bells, or other arts are rehearsed at LOGOS and then presented regularly in corporate worship. Each church decides the best fit with its own liturgy and worship style.
3. Family Time: The shared meal is a time to gather regular “table families” of various ages who eat together each week for the entire program year.

Kitchen teams prepare dinners that are served family style, using table settings and serving dishes, practicing the art of serving one another.

4. Recreation: All have great fun in a cooperative atmosphere, often drawing on the hobbies and interests of adults in the congregation willing to share their passions on a one-time basis or longer.

Weekly models, once thought to be too ambitious, are doable and sustainable over time. Many congregations have used parallel learning for all ages on a weekly basis for decades. In parallel learning, age-specific groups learn at their own level, and all groups focus on the same themes at the same time. The advantages of weekly, lectionary-based, intergenerational faith formation are obvious:

- Regular contact helps to build a positive faith formation habit into the life of families and individuals.
- A weekly check-in provides leaders a regular opportunity to coach families and individuals on how to live out what they learn during the rhythm of their weekly routines.
- Weekly focus on liturgy enhances Sunday worship, which is the most important gathering of any Christian faith community.
- Parents and other adults exploring their faith every week in the presence of children and teens sends the clear, unspoken, and powerful message that faith formation is a lifelong adventure that does not end with the onset of young adulthood.

Monthly Intergenerational Faith Formation

Many congregations across the country offer intergenerational learning monthly using a variety of age-group or affinity-group programs. The content for these programs is drawn from a variety of sources: Bible themes, the Sunday lectionary readings, church year feasts and seasons, Christian practices, service and social justice, prayer and spiritual disciplines, core Christian beliefs, moral teachings, and more.

St. Elizabeth of Hungary Church in Acton, Massachusetts, offers monthly intergenerational learning as the core faith formation experience for all ages. Their curriculum is *liturgically-centered*, connecting faith formation with the realities of daily experience and the Eucharistic celebration. It honors the primary place of the community in shared meals, Sunday Eucharist, and how people learn and grow. They schedule intergenerational learning monthly between Labor Day and the Easter season with four sessions per month to accommodate the large number of participants and their different schedules. Every session begins with a meal. What follows varies from month-to-month, but usually includes an opening activity in common and age-appropriate breakouts (grades K-4 with at least one parent,

middle school, high school, and adult). Each session runs no longer than two and one-half hours.

Each month's theme is drawn from one of the Sunday lectionary readings in that month. Their curriculum for a program year begins with readings from Cycle C (Gospel of Luke) and moves into Cycle A (Gospel of Matthew). It includes the following themes and scripture readings:

1. September: Stewardship (25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Luke 16:19-31)
2. October: Pray Always (29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Luke 18:1-8)
3. November: Last Things and Heaven (33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Luke 21:5-19)
4. December: Mary, Immaculate Conception (Luke 1: 26-38)
5. January: The Baptism of the Lord (Matthew 13-17)
6. February: You are the Salt of the Earth (5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Matthew 5:13-16)
7. March: The Temptation of Jesus (First Sunday of Lent, Matthew 4:1-11)
8. April: Palm Sunday (Matthew 26:14-27)

Immaculate Conception Church in Malden, Massachusetts, offers monthly intergenerational learning that is *event-centered*, connecting learning and participation in the life of the congregation. The program prepares people for active and meaningful participation events of church life (Sunday worship, church year feasts and seasons, sacramental life, service and mission, and more) and guides them in reflecting and applying the significance and meaning of the events to their lives. One example of this approach was a year that focused on The Creed: More Than Words. Here is a description:

When we stand and proclaim “I believe. . .” at Sunday worship, do we really mean what we say? The Creed tells the heart of our faith and explains who we are as Catholics. This year we’ll learn The Nicene Creed “by heart,” and come to know how what we believe affects the way we live our lives as Catholic Christians.

Eight monthly, two and one-half hour sessions (Faith Festivals) are offered with the following format:

1. Gathering including hospitality, fellowship, and meal
2. Opening prayer and all-ages learning experience

3. In-depth learning experiences (approximately ninety minutes) with age-appropriate learning experiences in smaller groups
4. Sharing learning reflections and home application
5. Closing prayer

Other churches are more thematic or topical in their approach, focusing on one theme for the year or integrating a variety of topics throughout the year. For example, intergenerational learning can focus on studying the Bible (great themes, selected books), Christian practices, justice themes and service, prayer and spirituality, core Christian beliefs, and so much more.

Intergenerational Small Groups

Kara Powell of the Fuller Youth Institute explains how she and her husband started an intergenerational small group. Based on the sticky faith research (see Chapter 1 and her book *Sticky Faith*), they invited a family in the same life stage with kids, a couple ten years younger still having babies, and a couple turning seventy to form an intentional community. She writes, “We are all loving it. I’ve never been in a small group with such age diversity before but it makes it so real and rich.” The group meets about every three to four weeks and stays in touch by email and through their church where they are all members. Powell describes the format:

1. We always start with a meal. It’s an important time of fellowship for us, and while the meetings are usually held at our house, we take turns bringing the food.
2. We always include the kids for at least part of the conversation. Sometimes they’re only with us for a few minutes. Other times the older kids (fifth grade and up) have chosen to stay with us longer, even for the entire time, while the younger kids tend to go outside or to the back of our house and play or maybe watch a video).
3. We always have a conversation on a particular topic. We’ve worked through books together, we’ve read articles together, and right now, we’re taking turns sharing our life stories and learning from each other’s histories.
4. We always share prayer requests. Sometimes the kids join us to share prayer requests; other times it’s just us grown-ups if there are some issues we need to discuss without younger ears around.
5. We always have fun. We want all of the kids involved to look forward to “Viper” (we let the kids name it, and that’s what they came up with), and they do. Our kids are always asking, “When’s the next Viper?”

(<http://stickyfaith.org/blog/what-do-we-actually-do-in-our-intergenerational-small-group#sthash.f1AeHcR2.dpuf>)

Learn more about the Sticky Faith project at <http://stickyfaith.org>.

Resources for Intergenerational Learning

For more examples of church providing weekly or monthly intergenerational learning go to www.IntergenerationalFaith.com.

Incorporating Intergenerational Learning into Congregational Faith Formation

There are many opportunities throughout the year to incorporate intergenerational learning into existing congregational events, learning programs, worship experiences, and justice and service projects. Here are several examples:

Extend a topic featured in the faith formation program for children or teens to the whole community through intergenerational learning. A topic that the children are studying can be extended to the whole community through intergenerational learning. For example, if the children are studying about Jesus, offer an intergenerational program on the identity of Christ for all ages. Schedule it within the same timeframe that the children are studying the unit on Jesus. If the young people are preparing for a service project or mission trip, use the opportunity to conduct an intergenerational session on Christian service and get everyone engaged in supporting the teenagers. Intergenerational learning provides a common learning experience for the whole community that can support age-group learning programs. Examine your age-group curriculum and look for the opportunities and topics for extending age-group learning to the whole community.

Replace a topic in the children or teen program with intergenerational learning on the same theme. Intergenerational learning can provide a different learning model for teaching the same content that would have been taught to the children. For example, replace the children's sessions on prayer with one or more intergenerational sessions on prayer for all members of the community. Children will benefit greatly by learning together with their parents and the other generations of the Christian community.

Add intergenerational learning to sacramental or milestones preparation and celebrations. Sacrament preparation offers a marvelous opportunity to offer intergenerational learning for the whole community and/or the extended family of the one preparing for the sacrament. The celebration of a sacrament, such as baptism or first communion, is an opportunity to enrich the faith of the whole community. For example, your church can offer intergenerational learning each year around the celebration of first communion, focusing on different elements of the Sunday liturgy. During confirmation preparation, intergenerational sessions

can be offered on themes such as baptism, conversion, mission, the Holy Spirit, and more.

Conduct intergenerational faith formation before liturgical year feasts.

The church calendar is rich with possibilities for intergenerational learning for the whole community. Conduct intergenerational programs to prepare all generations for major liturgical feasts and seasons, such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, and Pentecost, as well as significant events in the life of your church, such as the anniversary of the founding of the church, stewardship Sunday, or a ministries fair. There are dozens of opportunities for preparing the whole community to participate more intentionally and meaningfully in church events.

Add intergenerational learning to a vacation Bible school or summer program. Many churches sponsor summer programs for children. This is another opportunity to add an intergenerational learning program for the whole community. Take a theme from the summer program and offer an intergenerational program on that same theme for families of the children and the whole community. For example, if the focus of the program is being a friend of Jesus, the church can sponsor an intergenerational program on becoming a disciple or living as a disciple.

Conduct intergenerational learning for justice issues and action projects. Justice issues, events, and action projects provide opportunities to engage the whole community in the work of justice and service, as well as learn about the biblical teachings on justice. For example, prepare the community for a justice and service project, such as helping to feed and clothe the poor in your community, with an intergenerational program on poverty and the needs of the poor. Celebrate the national holiday for Martin Luther King, Jr., by conducting an intergenerational program on racial equality or peace and nonviolence, and then engage in an action project. Enlist the whole community in supporting the work of national and international organizations by adopting a project, such as building homes through Habitat for Humanity, and then conducting an intergenerational program on housing and poverty.

Sponsor an intergenerational retreat for the whole community. Many churches conduct a community-wide retreat over several days each year, usually with weekend and evening sessions. This is a great opportunity to enrich the faith of the whole community. Organize your retreat by conducting intergenerational sessions, rather than sessions for individual groups. Develop a focus, such as following Jesus, or growing in prayer, or what we believe as Christians. Select individual topics for each session of the mission and provide participants with materials to continue the retreat at home.

Works Cited

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Theory and Practice Resources

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Intergenerational Christian Formation (see chapters 15 and 18). Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross (IVP Academic, 2012).
Intergenerational Faith Formation. Mariette Martineau, Leif Kehrwald, and Joan Weber. (Twenty-Third Publications, 2008).

Intergenerational Program Resources

Growing Together: Four downloadable volumes of eight intergenerational celebrations: *Sacred Celebrations for Fall & Winter*, *Sacred Celebrations for Spring & Summer*, *Secular Celebrations for Fall & Winter*, and *Secular Celebrations for Spring & Summer*. (Church Publishing/Morehouse Education Publishing).
 LOGOS. GenOn Ministries (www.genonministries.org).
Loyola Press Intergenerational Resources: www.loyolapress.com/parish-ministry-intergenerational-catechesis.htm.
People of Faith Intergenerational Manuals. Six intergenerational sessions per volume: 1) *Acting for Justice*, 2) *Celebrating Sacraments*, 3) *Following Jesus*, 4) *Living the Moral Life*, 5) *Professing Our Faith*, and 6) *Responding in Prayer*. (Our Sunday Visitor Curriculum, 2004–2007).
WE Intergenerational Curriculum: The Epic Story (10 events), *The Tabernacle* (5 events), *The Unshakable Promise* (6 events), and *Expectations* (1 event). (Faith Alive Resources, 2011) (www.wecurriculum.org).

Online Resource Center

For more ideas, tools, resources and examples of Learning (curriculum resources and examples of congregations conducting intergenerational learning) go to www.IntergenerationalFaith.com.



Praying

Nurturing the spiritual life of the whole community through churchwide prayer services, rituals, and blessings throughout the year that bring together all ages and generations, engaging people in spiritual formation.

The congregation's prayer and ritual life, in addition to Sunday worship, offers multiple opportunities for becoming intentionally intergenerational throughout the year. Think of all the possibilities in your congregation and imagine how they could become opportunities for connecting the generations in prayer. Consider having *prayer services* and *rituals* during the church year seasons and holidays of the year, such as Ash Wednesday, reconciliation services, Thanksgiving, Liturgy of the Hours, and more. Offer *blessings* for the people and life situations in your congregation: those who are sick, teens leaving on a mission trip, Mother's Day and Father's Day, graduations, retirements, anniversaries, and more.

When planning and leading prayer services, rituals, and blessings for intergenerational groups, incorporate these elements and dynamics to make them inclusive of people of all ages:

1. dynamic storytelling
2. diverse prayer styles and forms with a good mix of the traditional and the contemporary
3. interactive reproductions of traditional prayers, such as transforming the rosary into a living rosary with participants standing on large beads made from colored paper or holding candles that are ignited as each part of the prayer is prayed
4. call and response prayers
5. contemporary Christian music with a variety of instruments: guitar, bass, drums, keyboard, and so forth
6. representatives from all age groups in leadership roles
7. audio, video, artistic, and visual elements to enhance the sensory experience of the prayer

Using a wide variety of prayer forms and expressions creatively is essential for addressing the spirituality of all ages and generations. Here are several examples of intergenerational prayer, rituals, and blessings.

Intergenerational Formation in Spiritual Practices and Disciplines

Churches can develop the spiritual life of all age groups and families through intergenerational teaching and experiences of spiritual practices and disciplines (see “Learning” beginning on page 117 for examples of models). Congregations can offer intergenerational spiritual formation experiences throughout the year—each one focused on essential spiritual practice such as *Lectio Divina*, scripture reflection, spiritual reading, contemplation, fixed-hour prayer, the examen, solitude and silence, Sabbath, praying with art and music, discernment, fasting, and prayer styles and traditions. These intergenerational experiences can be conducted in large group or small group formats, retreat formats, and as part of church year festivals. They also can be connected to Sunday worship or the celebration of Advent or Lent.

A congregation also can integrate age-group spiritual formation with intergenerational gatherings. Churches can engage all ages in spiritual formation programs designed for their age group and offered within the same timeframe during the year (an eight week period, season of year, and so forth). Each group would be exploring and experiencing the same content, using a resource like *Companions in*

Christ (Upper Room Books). Intergenerational experiences would be woven into the schedule and provide an all-ages living laboratory for experiencing a variety of spiritual practices that the groups have explored in their age-group programming.

Resources

Joy Together: Spiritual Practices for Your Congregation by Lynn Baab (Westminster/John Knox, 2012) provides a community-wide approach to engaging all ages with six spiritual disciplines.

Responding in Prayer by Mariette Martineau, Leif Kehrwald, and Joan Weber (Our Sunday Visitor Curriculum, 2006) includes six intergenerational prayer sessions that would be helpful in implementing these ideas.

Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun (IVP Books, 2005) develops designs for learning more than fifty spiritual practices.

Intergenerational Prayer Stations

Sanctuary Covenant Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, (www.sanctuarycov.org) developed a partnership between their children and youth and prayer ministries to offer an intergenerational opportunity for congregants to pray creatively. They offer three programs each year. The goal is to create a space for intergenerational prayer through creative modes of prayer. The event is set up as prayer stations for people of all ages with a different form of prayer at each station. Here are examples of the prayer stations they have created:

- *Praying through silence.* A reflective and peaceful room or space is set up with Gregorian chants or other music to drown out noises from other stations.
- *Praying through movement.* A large space is set aside for people to dance and use movement through prayer. A leader facilitates the time by playing music and allowing people to dance freely, while teaching simple steps for people to dance to during the chorus of a song. Another option is a prayer walk.
- *Praying through creating.* Tables and chairs are set up in a comfortable space for people to create tools for praying. Prayer beads can be made with fishing line or string and include a cross or other Christian symbols. Beads symbolize something that each person can pray about (a family member, friend, prayer request, and so forth). Prayer shawls can symbolize how God covers us while we pray, how God is present in our prayers, and how we should be covering ourselves and others in prayer. A prayer rock on which people write a word, phrase, or short verse can be kept in their pocket as a reminder.
- *Praying through writing.* Journals are set out on tables for people to write down their prayers and then take the journal home. Another option is to add a prayer wall to write prayers.

- *Praying through colors.* Sheets of paper with an outline of a tree are made available. In each branch people write a person or thing to pray for using crayons or markers.
- *Praying in community.* Adults from the prayer team are available to pray for families, especially empowering and encouraging parents and guardians to be primary spiritual mentors of their children.

Private Prayer with an Intergenerational Twist

Intergenerational prayer is not limited to communal prayer. Church leaders can also encourage individuals to nurture an intergenerational perspective in their private prayer. Youth ministers can promote this perspective among teens by challenging them regularly to bring to mind parishioners and others who are in need from all of the generations in the parish. Modeling this at youth group meetings will encourage teens to incorporate this perspective into their private prayer as well. Developing simple prayer cards could be a helpful resource for teens. The prayer cards can focus on short prayers for parents, seniors, and children.

The same concept can be used for adults and children. Church leaders can challenge each generation to keep in mind the hopes and needs of those from the other generations and to take those needs to the Lord in prayer. Nurturing intergenerational perspectives in private prayer will help to plant the seeds for intergenerationality throughout the parish by getting individuals to think and pray beyond the perspectives of their own age group.

Prayer Partners

Special events in church life such as first communion or confirmation usually involve a preparation process that lasts for several months. Some churches have initiated a prayer partner program that connects older members with younger members who are preparing for these events. The prayer partners are randomly matched. One requirement is that the participating adults can't be from the family of the young person. This requirement promotes broader community participation across the generations. The partners are only required to do one thing—pray for each other, but usually a lot more happens. The praying seems to inspire a desire to connect more personally and the prayer partners start communicating by mail. The adult partners almost always go out of their way to be present for the first communion, confirmation, or whatever event is being celebrated. Many intergenerational prayer partner programs end up forging friendships that last for years. This, of course, feeds the related element of intergenerational caring.

Intergenerational Prayer Groups

Churches can develop intergenerational programs focused on the Christian practice of prayer. The programs can offer a blend of age-specific and intergenerational prayer experiences. Topics can cover the wide range of prayer forms in the Christian tradition. Here are two options:

Option 1

1. Gather for an all-ages opening to introduce the prayer form of the day.
2. Divide groups into generational breakout sessions (young children, older children, teens, young adults, middle adults, older adults) where they learn about the prayer form and practice its elements.
3. During the age-specific learning, each generation develops a way to contribute to the prayer form that expresses the unique character of their generation. For example, the young children may develop body movement to accompany the prayer while teens create a visual arts expression to use during the prayer. Older adults might pick a refrain from a traditional hymn to chant and young adults might search the web for a video clip that would be appropriate.
4. Create intergenerational groups to experience the prayer form together using all of the elements developed in the age-specific groups.

Option 2

1. Begin with a traditional prayer form and invite all participants to experience it together.
2. Break into small age-specific groups to discuss how their generation might creatively add to or alter the prayer form.
3. Continue the session with each generation presenting their modification.
4. Create small intergenerational groups to discuss what they appreciate about each generation's contribution.

Prayer and Play

The most successful intergenerational practitioners know how to infuse faith formation with a playful spirit. Shannon Kelly in a blog post on www.FaithFormationLearningExchange.net writes about the three creative ways to pray with groups:

1. *One Word.* One person begins by saying one word, followed by the next, and so on around the circle. Everyone in the circle says one word as it moves around the circle thus creating a prayer together. Usually it will move around the circle two or three times before someone thinks the prayer is complete and says Amen.
2. *Gathering prayer scrabble.* As a group is gathering have a sentence for the group to complete such as, “I ask God for . . .” or “I give thanks for . . .” or “God, help me to . . .” Have a scrabble board available and invite participants to complete the sentence using the scrabble tiles and building off one another’s words. Once you are gathered, have someone read the beginning sentence and the words from the scrabble board.
3. *Prayer Tree.* As people are gathering, have an old branch or a board with nails or something you can hang things on. Invite them to write a prayer on a piece of paper and hang it on a branch for the meeting. Before the meeting ends, invite them to take a prayer (other than their own) with them and pray it for the week. This practice brings the group closer together and helps demonstrate that prayer is both individual and communal.

Spiritual Guides or Mentors

Churches can identify people who model discipleship and live the spiritual practices to serve as spiritual mentors or guides for people of all ages on their spiritual journey. Prepare people through a retreat experience focused on their spiritual life, spiritual practices, and guiding others on their spiritual journey. Create a community of spiritual mentors/guides who meet regular for sharing, prayer, scripture study, and discernment in the service of their ministry of spiritual formation. Engage the spiritual guides or mentors in one-on-one or small group spiritual formation by adding a spiritual mentoring component to existing spiritual formation programs and small groups.

Online Resource Center

For more ideas, tools, and resources for Praying (intergenerational prayer ideas and resources) go to www.IntergenerationalFaith.com.



Serving

Engaging all ages and generations in service and mission to the world, especially to the poor and vulnerable, in caring for creation, and in the works of justice and advocacy through local and global projects.

The congregation's mission of transforming the world according to Jesus' vision of the kingdom of God involves *service* to those who are poor and vulnerable. This involves direct action to help people survive their present need or crisis, relieve their anxieties and remove their burdens, and lead them to the dignity of self-reliance—and *working for justice*—speaking up for people whose rights are being denied or oppressed and trying to reform structures that cause or perpetuate their oppression. Efforts to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, welcome the stranger, and serve the poor and vulnerable need to be accompanied by concrete efforts to address the causes of human suffering and injustice—to help change systems and structures that deny people their most basic human rights. The congregation's mission also includes *peacemaking*—in our families, communities, and world; and *caring for creation* by being faithful stewards of God's creation—protecting people and the planet.

Intergenerational service engages people of all ages in working together to serve the poor and vulnerable, work for justice, be peacemakers, and care for creation. Intergenerational service provides benefits to individuals, families, and the whole church community:

- Intergenerational service helps narrow the generation gap between older and younger church members.
- Intergenerational service helps people grow spiritually as they pray for, give to, and do service together.
- Intergenerational service recognizes that all people in the church, regardless of age, have talents to contribute that are valuable and important.
- Intergenerational service assists children and youth in feeling a part of the church today, not just the church of tomorrow.
- Intergenerational service appeals to busy families who want to spend more quality time together.
- Intergenerational service connects the generations and builds relationships as they serve God by serving their neighbor. It builds teamwork across the congregation.
- Intergenerational service communicates that it is the responsibility of all Christians, regardless of age, to serve people and work for justice as followers of Jesus Christ.

Designing Intergenerational Service

Eugene Roehlkepartain and Jenny Friedman offer a number of practical guidelines and suggestions for family service, which can easily be applied to intergenerational service. They suggest the following:

1. Make the activities meaningful, so that every person, regardless of age, can contribute in a significant way.
2. Supply mentors or mentor families to individuals or families that have had little or no experience in service.
3. Offer various options to suit individuals and families with different ages, interests, time constraints, and locations.
4. Include preparation and reflection as part of any church-sponsored service activity.
5. Offer some simple “in-house” activities. Although some people are enthusiastic about and ready for community ministry, others may be more comfortable initially with simple service activities they can complete at the church.
6. Hold a service fair for all generations.
7. Provide service resources (books, media, websites) for families and all generations; include children’s books that focus on caring for others.
8. Become a clearinghouse for local and global service opportunities.
9. Organize regular family and intergenerational service days and events.
10. Organize an annual family and/or intergenerational mission trip.
11. Celebrate what church members are already doing.

Organize service projects and mission trips that are developmental in scope with projects geared to different levels of involvement and challenge:

- local mission projects lasting anywhere from a few hours to one day in length
- short-term mission trips lasting anywhere from two to five days and requiring an overnight stay on location
- weeklong mission trips within the United States as well as to foreign countries, designed for those who are ready to take the next big step in service
- global expedition trips of ten to fourteen days that provide the opportunity to be immersed for a longer period in the targeted community and culture

- personalized small group mission trips, organized around the interests and time of the group

Incorporate social analysis and theological reflection with action projects to guide people in developing a deeper understanding of the causes of injustice and the teachings of scripture and the Christian tradition. The process includes: (1) connect to a social issue (experience)—how people are personally affected by an issue or how the issue affects others, (2) explore the social issue (social analysis) to understand the causes and underlying factors that promote or sustain the issue; (3) reflect upon the teachings of scripture and the Christian tradition (theological reflection) to develop a faith perspective on the social issue and how people of faith can address the issue; and (4) develop ways to address the issue (action) by working for social change and serving those in need as individuals, groups, communities, and/or organizations.

The process can begin with a service involvement, leading to social analysis and theological reflection. It also can begin with people’s experience of a social issue, leading to analysis of the issue, connecting the issue to the faith tradition, developing action projects of direct service to those in need, and advocating social change. (For more information see *Social Analysis* by Joe Holland and Peter Henriot.)



Ideas for Intergenerational Service

A Local Mission Trip

Families on a Mission, created by Jim Merhaut, is an example of a local mission experience to complement the usual long-distance mission trips that churches sponsor for teens and adults. The local emphasis helps a church fulfill its role of being a haven for the community in which it is established. It strengthens the relationship between the church and the poor and vulnerable members of the surrounding community, and promotes the church as a valuable resource in the community. The model gives parents and other adults an opportunity to mentor children and teens into the Christian life of service. It gives children and teens an opportunity to feel the power of making a significant difference in the lives of others. It gives local service agencies the opportunity to partner with a church that can provide much needed volunteer hours. And it gives the recipients of the service an opportunity to show the face of Christ to church members in a way that only they can do.

Families on a Mission is a three-day experience. All of the families meet in the morning at church to pray together, engage in a thematic icebreaker experience, and anticipate some key dynamics that would likely happen at the service sites. Families work each morning at agencies and organizations close to the church. Entire families offer service together—parents (grandparents) and children working side-by-side to serve the needs of poor and vulnerable members in the local community. In one church, families served at an educational facility offered for single mothers and their young children, provided recreational activities in a nursing home, and worked at a facility that serves children from families who have a member suffering from HIV/AIDS. After working at their individual service sites (where they serve all three days), the families return to the church to engage in two to three hours of service learning experiences. The families then depart to their homes for the evening.

Watch the *Families on a Mission Introductory Video* on www.intergenerationalfaith.com.

As is common with family and intergenerational programming, deep friendships form among the participants and across the generations. Families continue to socialize and reminisce about how good the program was for all of them. They also continue to incorporate service into their routines, but they do it with a greater sense of purpose.

National and International Intergenerational Mission Trips

There are organizations that sponsor service family and intergenerational learning trips domestically and globally. While the price tag for these programs can be significant, the rewards are enormous. Some individuals and families use their vacation time to participate in a mission trip. There are a number of organizations that sponsor mission trips for whole families and multiple generations:

Cross Cultural Solutions (www.crossculturalsolutions.org)

Outreach 360 (<http://outreach360.org>)

Global Volunteers (www.globalvolunteers.org)

Be sure to check your own denomination for recommendations.

One Ohio church offered a family mission trip for ten years to assist a small community in rural Kentucky develop a community center in a vandalized school building. Approximately forty to fifty church members of all ages made the six-hour trip by car each year to spend a week renovating the building and helping to design and participate in community outreach programs, especially for women and children from the surrounding area. Over the years, children and families from the congregation forged friendships with children and families from the small Kentucky community. Both communities learned much from each other and benefited from the project. The trips ended when the community center developed into a thriving resource run by a small professional staff and volunteers who had participated in the programs during the building project. This service project was designed and implemented entirely by church members who partnered with a small service organization in Carter County Kentucky run by two Franciscan sisters.

An Annual Churchwide Service Day

Mobilize the whole faith community through an annual churchwide justice and service project. An example of this type of churchwide involvement is *Faith in Action Day* sponsored by World Vision and Outreach, Inc. (www.putyourfaithinaction.org). This is a four-week, churchwide campaign that culminates on a Sunday where the entire congregation engages in service projects in and with the community. As an individual church or with churches in your area, select a local or global project already developed by a justice or service organization. Then develop an annual theme, such as poverty, care for creation, peacemaking. Prepare the whole community for the service engagement, utilizing the resources developed by the partner organizations. Include (1) worship and prayer experiences focused on the particular theme or project; (2) educational sessions including social analysis of the issues and reflection on the teachings of scripture and the Christian tradition; (3) household activities on the theme or project such as prayers, learning resources, and action suggestions; (4) a website with the resources, activities, action projects, and features to allow people to share what they are doing; and (5) special presentations by experts on the issues and by people engaged in action on the issue.

A Monthly Intergenerational Service Project

Using the same design as the churchwide service day, a congregation can develop a monthly service project that addresses one particular need or issue (local and/or global) each month. Each month's project can include a short educational program

of the topic, an action project, and reflection on the project. Themes for the service projects can correspond with calendar events and seasons, as well as church year seasons. Examples include Back to School (September) and school kits for students Thanksgiving (November) and feeding the hungry, Lent (February or March) and serving the poor, and Earth Day (April) and caring for creation.

Intergenerational Service Nights at Church

Service Nights are simple, self-contained programs at church that feature five to ten service activity stations that engage all ages in doing a simple project for the benefit of someone or some group in need. At one station people might create greeting cards for the elderly or for sick church members. At another booth they might make blankets for a homeless shelter. At another booth they might bake cookies or make sandwiches for a soup kitchen. There are lots of ways to contribute to service organizations without having to leave your church building. Doing Good Together is an organization that promotes and supports family service. They publish a manual on how to organize a family service night. You can learn more about them and their family service night resources at www.doinggoodtogether.org.

One church offers a repeat opportunity every month for church members of all ages to participate in a simple service project. The church has partnered with a program called Feed My Starving Children (www.fmsc.org). Intergenerational groups gather monthly to pack food that will be shipped overseas by the charity. The simplicity of this experience would make it easy to build service learning around it, and it could be a very nonthreatening entry point for many people to get started on building their practice of Christian service.

World Vision has two programs that provide global projects for a service night. AIDS Caregiver Kits (www.worldvision.org) engages people in creating Caregiver Kits with basic supplies for those living with AIDS while protecting caregivers and preventing the spread of infection. Churches and small groups raise funds for and assemble Caregiver Kits, which are shipped to World Vision distribution centers and then to AIDS-affected communities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

World Vision's SchoolTools Kits (www.worldvision.org) is a program that inspires hope in children by providing them with the valuable school materials they so desperately need. SchoolTools collects kits of specific school supplies and delivers them through various ministry partners to needy children who wouldn't be able to attend class without them. Churches assemble kits full of simple school supplies that are shipped to children in the United States and all over the world.

Intergenerational Service Project Ideas

There are so many ways to act on a particular need or issue. And there are so many people and organizations already engaged in transforming the world that

will provide assistance in developing intergenerational service projects. The internet provides easy access to ideas and organizations to assist you. Be sure to check with your denomination for ideas and recommendations.

Below is a list of project ideas that are great candidates for intergenerational service. For suggestions on how to organize intergenerational service projects and more great ideas, check out the book *Doing Good Together: 101 Easy Meaningful Service Projects for Families, Schools, and Communities* by Jenny Friedman and Jolene Roehlkepartain (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2010).

Serving the poor and vulnerable

- Prepare and serve a meal at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.
- Donate goods such as food for the local food bank, clothing, school kits for children, “personal essentials” for those at a homeless shelter, a toy collection at Christmas, gift packages for prisoners.
- Care for the elderly by visiting them at a convalescent home or senior citizen facility or doing chores and shopping.
- Build or repair homes.
- Support efforts to provide vaccines and medical care to the world’s poor, such as provide mosquito nets for malaria prevention, immunizations against childhood disease, and HIV/AIDs treatment.
- Work with people who have disabling conditions.
- Conduct a churchwide or community-wide intergenerational fundraising project to (a) support the efforts of local and national groups who work directly with the poor, (b) adopt a community in another country by supporting them financially and learning about their culture and community life, (c) support organizations that are building schools and libraries for children in the poorest countries of the world by providing books and/or our money to purchase books for children.

Acting for justice to ensure the rights of all people

- Develop intergenerational justice teams to advocate for just policies and priorities that protect human life, promote human dignity, preserve God’s creation, and build peace by (a) becoming familiar with pending legislation or proposals that affect people’s basic needs, (b) writing advocacy letters or emails, (c) working with advocacy groups, (d) working with organizations that are changing the structures that promote injustice.
- Support organizations that are working for justice—locally, nationally, and internationally by promoting the purpose and activities of organizations, providing financial support, and volunteering time to work with the organization.
- Develop a program or campaign to educate people in your church or community about a particular justice issue.

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- Hold a Fair Trade Festival to provide a way for members of the church community to buy fair trade products, such as coffee, chocolate, and crafts that benefit local producers in the developing world.

Working for peace

- Work to end the violence of human trafficking of children by working with organizations seeking to shut down trafficking rings and providing support for the victims.
- Address violence in the media through a churchwide or community-wide campaign that encourages by not purchasing and/or abstaining or limiting exposure to violent TV shows, movies, video games, and toys.
- Sponsor an intergenerational community-wide peace festival, working with organizations that seek to build bridges of understanding among people.

Caring for creation

- Conduct a campaign to educate and raise funds to adopt a piece of the planet through the Nature Conservancy's "Adopt an Acre" and "Rescue the Reef" programs, and the Rainforest Alliance's "Adopt-a-Rainforest" program or protect endangered species and their habitats through the World Wildlife Fund's projects.
- Sponsor a community-wide "care for the environment day" by planting trees in your community and cleaning up the community.

Resources

Doing Good Together: 101 Easy Meaningful Service Projects for Families, Schools, and Communities.

Jenny Friedman and Jolene Roehlkepartain. (Free Spirit Publishing, 2010).

Inside Out Families: Living the Faith Together. Diana Garland. (Baylor University Press, 2010).

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The Kid's Guide to Service Projects. (2nd Edition) Barbara Lewis. (Free Spirit Publishing, 2009).

Learn, Serve, Succeed: Tools and Techniques for Youth Service-Learning. Kate McPherson. (Search Institute, 2011).

Mission Trips that Matter: Embodied Faith for the Sake of the World. Don Richter. (Upper Room Books, 2008).

Social Analysis—Linking Faith and Justice. Joseph Holland and Peter Henriot. (Orbis, 1983).

Social Justice Handbook: Small Steps for a Better World. Mae Elise Cannon. (IVP Books, 2009).

Online Resource Center

For more ideas, tools, resources, and examples of Serving (intergenerational service programs, organizations, and examples) go to www.IntergenerationalFaith.com.