



GROW VIBRANT FAITH



Cross+Generational Engagement Strategies

IDEA 1 | USE WHAT YOU'RE ALREADY DOING.

Use intergenerational events and all-church experiences (e.g., worship/lectionary, seasons of the year, service/mission actions, prayer, etc.) **as the primary "content" and experiences** for faith formation in intergenerational programs or age-group programs. The focus is on building connections among people of all ages, and involves the following three steps:

1. Prepare people, intergenerationally or in age groups, with the knowledge and practices needed to participate in an all-church event.
2. Experience/participate in the intergenerational church event or experience.
3. Reflect upon the meaning of the event and discover how to live/practice that which was learned in daily life using onsite and online activities and resources.

Examples:

- Engage people in learning about worship and how to worship in intergenerational settings.
- Integrate all ages into Sunday worship with the faith community and model how to live the Sunday worship experience in their daily lives (with activities and resources delivered online).
- Invite people to learn about the justice issues of our day and the biblical and church teachings on justice, service, and care for creation. Offer intergenerational justice and service experience for the whole faith community where they can locally and globally engage in the practices of serving those in need, caring for creation, and working for justice. These experiences can be for individuals to work with their peers, families, and their church or even with other groups and organizations.
- Help people learn about the Bible and how to read it, interpret it, and apply it to their lives. Create ways to experience the Bible at Sunday worship and at home and help offer resources for individuals to develop their own practice of Bible study and reading.
- Introduce people to Jesus and the Christian tradition - teachings, history, practices, what it means for life today, and how to live the Christian faith every day. Church calendars, feasts, and seasons are great times to introduce some of these teachings.

IDEA 2 | INFUSE INTERGENERATIONAL ACTIVITIES INTO EXISTING EVENTS.

For Example:

- Incorporate intergenerational dialogues into programming.
- Develop mentoring relationships (prayer partners, spiritual direction mentors and guides, service partnerships, confirmation mentors)
- Link people of different generations who have insights and life experiences that may be helpful to other generations. For example, midlife and older adults can help young adults and new parents with financial management or household management, or young people can help older adults navigate the digital and online world.
- Involve the community in prayer for a generation during a mission trip or retreat weekend
- Celebrate milestones such as the birth of a child, marriage, graduation, and retirement.
- Develop specific roles for the younger generations in church leadership, such as adolescents serving as teachers in children's faith formation or as worship leaders. Organize a leadership or ministry apprenticeship for younger generations to serve in church ministries and leadership positions.
- Sponsor music and art projects: community concerts where musicians of all ages perform together, an intergenerational art exchange/exhibit, or an Advent or Lent music festival.



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Bringing generations together within the church provides benefits and blessings on a variety of levels. Insights from research and pastoral experience tell us that being intentionally intergenerational:

- Reclaims God's intent for faith to be shared in community and across generations.
- Affirms each person's value in the total community (regardless of age).
- Fosters a foundation of support of each other's concerns, interests, and activities.
- Provides "up close and personal" formation in faith as children, teens, young adults, middle-aged adults, and older adults engage in sharing faith, teaching, learning, and praying for one another.
- Teaches us to care for one another.
- Provides role models for children and youth.
- Teaches us to value older adults.
- Allows us to pass on the traditions of family and faith.
- Enhances people's identification with their congregation and integration within the community.
- Encourages greater faith in all generations.
- Creates special relationships between adults and youth.
- Fosters leadership regardless of age or stature.
- Utilizes the strengths (wisdom, experience, knowledge, etc) of one generation to meet the needs of another generation.
- Promotes understanding of shared values and respect for individuals in all stages and ages of life.
- Utilizes the creative talents of each generation to provide service to the church and community.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR BECOMING INTENTIONALLY INTERGENERATIONAL...

- Form and deepen Christian identity and commitment as people develop relationships and actively participate in faith communities that teach, model, and live the Christian tradition and way of life.
- Provide a curriculum for the whole community—Sunday worship, the lectionary and church year seasons, learning, service, ritual and sacraments, prayer, and more—that is a shared experience in faith and belonging for everyone.
- Strengthen relationships, connections, and community across generations, enhance a sense of belonging in the faith community, and provide valuable adult role models for young people.
- Support families by surrounding them with a community of faith and engaging the whole family in a variety of faith-forming experiences together (caring relationships, celebrating, learning, praying, serving) and provide parents with opportunities to learn from Christians who are practicing their faith and raising faithful children.
- Strengthen the ability (confidence and competence) of parents and grandparents to promote religious socialization at home, to be role models of faithful practice, and to engage in faith practices at home while developing warm, affirming, and unconditionally supporting relationships between parents (and grandparents) and their children, teens, and young adults.



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IDEA 3 | CHOOSE NEW PROGRAMS/EXPERIENCES TO CREATE THAT ENGAGE ALL GENERATIONS.

Choose or create new intergenerational programs and experiences that bring together all of the generations for learning, celebrating, praying, reading the Bible, serving and working for justice, and worshipping.

Create Intergenerational Learning Opportunities

- Develop a faith formation curriculum for the whole community using intergenerational faith formation as the primary learning model. A topic featured in the faith formation program can also be extended for children or teens to engage the whole community through intergenerational learning.
- Replace a topic in the children or teen program with intergenerational learning on the same theme.
- Add intergenerational learning to sacramental preparation and celebrations.
- Add intergenerational learning to an existing VBS, camp, or summer program or design a new program that is specifically intergenerational and includes all ages (example: a camp for grandparents and grandchildren.)
- Conduct intergenerational learning for justice issues and action projects.
- Sponsor an intergenerational retreat for the whole community.

Create Intergenerational Service Experiences

Churches can incorporate intergenerational service into existing service projects and activities and create intergenerational versions of an existing program. Almost any service project can become intergenerational, such as:

- Offering mission trips for adults and young people.
- Connecting youth with adults who already prepare and serve meals at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.
- Engaging children, parents, and older adults in collecting and delivering food baskets, school kits for children, "personal essentials" for those at a homeless shelter, gathering or packaging toys at Christmas, building gift packages for prisoners, and so forth.
- Involve families in caring for the elderly; visit them at a senior facility or help with chores and shopping.
- Support efforts to provide vaccines and medical care to the world's poor, such as mosquito nets for malaria prevention and immunizations against childhood disease.
- Holding a fair-trade festival to provide a way for people to buy fair trade products, such as coffee, chocolate, and crafts, that benefit local producers in the developing world.
- Sponsor a community-wide "care for the environment day" by planting trees and cleaning up in the community.

REFLECTIONS QUESTIONS FOR FAITH FORMATION LEADERS

1. Which current activities do you **USE** to engage all generations? What might you do in the future?
2. How might you **INFUSE** intergenerational activities into existing programs and ministries?
3. Which new activities might you **CHOOSE** to create to promote intergenerational connections?



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List **Strategies** for *USING, INFUSING, & CHOOSING*

CARING RELATIONSHIPS & COMMUNITY

1. How can you **USE** opportunities that already exist and develop new ways to connect generations?
2. How can you **INFUSE** intergenerational relationship-building into current congregational ministries, programs, activities, and experiences?
3. How can you **CHOOSE** (or create) new intergenerational programs, activities, and experiences that create caring relationships across generations?

LEARNING & SPIRITUAL FORMATION

1. How can you **USE** Sunday worship, seasonal celebrations, and milestone rituals (before, during, and after worship and celebrations) to connect people?
2. How can you **INFUSE** intergenerational relationship-building into Sunday worship, seasonal celebrations, and milestone rituals (before, during, and after worship and celebrations)?
3. How can you **CHOOSE** (or create) new intergenerational worship, seasonal celebrations, and milestone rituals that bring all of the generations together. How could you **transform** existing worship, seasonal celebrations, and milestone rituals into intergenerational experiences?

SERVING, WORKING FOR JUSTICE, CARING FOR CREATION

1. How can you **USE** age-specific service and mission projects to connect with all ages and generations?
2. How can you **INFUSE** intergenerational relationship-building and experiences into the congregation's service and mission to the community and to the world, and through its age-specific service and mission?
3. How can you **CHOOSE** new intergenerational service projects and mission activities that bring all generations together?



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