

Intergenerational Workshop

Contact Details

Amy Shephard amy.shephard@methodistyouth.org.uk 07708 559419

Definitions

Intergenerational Ministry/Church has been defined in many ways, this is the definition I used in my dissertation:

‘Intergenerational ministry occurs when a congregation intentionally brings the generations together in mutual serving, sharing or learning within the core activities of the church in order to live out being the body of Christ to each other and the greater community.’ (Ross, 2006)

The key aspects that are clear from most definitions are that IG ministry is intentional, intertwined and strategic. Churches must go into this intentionally, not just because they have no other choice. If their heart isn't in it, it won't work. IG ministry is intertwined with other peer-based ministries, strategically creating a unique and diverse ministry across the whole church.

Multi-generational ministry is what you get in most churches, the different generations are happy to come together (e.g. for worship) but there is no shared learning, there is no mentoring, there is no cross-generation relationships being built.

Transgenerational ministry refers, in its simplest form, to when a church has a number of programs that a person will grow up through the church, for example, starting in creche, moving through various children's and youth groups, through student ministry, into ministries specifically aimed at young parents, middle age adults and then onto third age ministry.

Research

Stats:

- From 1930 to 2013, there was a 20% decline in church membership (30% to 10.3%)
- This decline was apparent in all the major denominations
- If current trends continue, it is estimated that membership will be down to 8.4% of the population by 2025.
- And, at the beginning of the 20th century, children under the age of 15 attending Sunday schools was at about 55% of the population of that age group.
- By 2010, this had fallen to 5.1% (although Sunday Schools have changed a lot since the 1900's, so this is perhaps not as surprising as first thought)
- In a 2016 YouGov Poll, 28% of participants said they believed in God or another spiritual higher power, but 38% of participants said they didn't believe in either.

IG Starting Checklist

TIME

JOURNEY

TEAM

PLANNING

CONTEXT

STRUCTURE

STORY

GRACE

Planning questions:

- What are you seeing in your church?
- What do you want to see?
- Who will you need with you?
- How long will it take?
- What resources (time, money, people and objects) will you need?

Structure questions:

- Where will you start?
- When will you start?
- How will you take the WHOLE church with you?
- How will you review what has happened?
- How will you move forward from your review?

Context questions:

- Who are your worship services aimed at?
- Who comes to them?
- Who's engaging in the worship?
- Who are your community outreach programmes aimed at?
- Who comes to them?
- Who engages in them?
- What are the missing generations?
- Where are they if not in church? (check the football field!)
- What gaps are there in the community?
- What does the community need?

Spiritual styles

Head over to www.rootsontheweb.com to find out more about David Csinos' Spiritual Styles. You don't need to have a subscription, just go to Discover Roots and find Spiritual Styles on the drop down menu.

The screenshot shows the 'ROOTS' logo at the top left. Below it is the title 'Spiritual styles' in a blue font. Underneath the title is the subtitle 'Exploring the variety of ways in which people experience God and make sense of the world around them'. To the right of the text is a circular diagram with four colored circles: 'Word' (red), 'Emotion' (green), 'Symbol' (purple), and 'Action' (blue). Below the diagram are two columns of text. The left column is titled 'Getting to know you...' and contains two paragraphs of text. The right column is titled 'Evie' and contains two bullet points. At the bottom right of the page is a small photo of a woman and a child, with the caption 'Evie knows God when she can feel God, especially when she's with others.'

ROOTS

Spiritual styles

Exploring the variety of ways in which people experience God and make sense of the world around them

Getting to know you...

The ROOTS resources take account of people's different spiritual preferences. These preferences were described as 'spiritual styles' by Canadian theologian and practitioner, David Csinos. He wrote six articles for ROOTS on the different ways in which people express their spirituality and experience God. They can be found in the *Worship and Learning support* section of the ROOTS website, www.rootsontheweb.com

The four styles: Word, Emotion, Symbol and Action, describe the way we behave and interact differently with each other, why we prefer different styles of worship and what helps us to perceive and connect with God. We have learned that taking account of people's different spiritual preferences when planning worship and learning can enable everyone to connect with God more readily and develop as disciples. The ROOTS resources offer support across the styles to help leaders who want to prepare truly inclusive worship. This year, we will be providing more specific guidance to help you to plan and prepare for different types of worship service and children's and youth groups.

Evie

Evie really likes

- being part of church clubs and groups
- singing together with everyone
- baking things to share during fellowship time
- being involved in drama and dance at church
- looking at religious art
- to know how people are feeling

Evie is really uncomfortable

- when she can't actively participate in worship
- if she's asked to organise a charity campaign in youth club
- during the reflection times on a youth retreat

Evie knows God when she can feel God, especially when she's with others.

Emotion

Resources:

- Table Talk has boxes of questions, some for peer groups, but plenty on lots of different topics that affect all of us – wellbeing, justice, lockdown etc. They offer some of the topics as an App as well!



Table Talk for Change
£4.00 GBP

Table Talk for Wellbeing
£20.00 GBP

- Fusion sell card decks of interesting topics of conversation

- o Deep Meaningful Conversations (DMC Deck)
- o Discipleship Deck
- o P.R.A.Y Deck



DISCIPLESHIP DECK

DMC DECK

- Conversation Cubes – I found these on Amazon, they work a treat! Simply get a group of people (of different ages), get someone to roll one of the dice, and everyone can answer the question!



- At My Best have various resources, but I would suggest the Strengths cards, or the Good Question Cards.



- Values Cards offer groups the chance to see what each other value the most and what they value as a group – again, I found these one's on Amazon, but there are many other resources that are similar!



Intergenerational Audit:

How to organise a small group of people to do some observing of the churches life.

Gather together a group of people. These people do not need to be interested in

planning, organising and leading intergenerational worship and events, but would need to be honest and open about what they observe. They should be of different ages and roles within the church.

Their role in this group will be to observe the church community in worship, prayer and fellowship, write down their observations, and report back to the rest of the group.

Ask the people to go to their groups and services as normal, but to take time to observe and consider the following questions:

1. How many people are there?
2. Who is there? (think about age, gender, class, ethnicity etc)
3. Why are they there? (think about family, age, friends, style, preference etc)
4. Who is it aimed at?
5. How many of those whom this is aimed at are paying attention?
6. What is everyone else doing?
7. How does the space work for those that have attended?
8. What obstacles/barriers can you see? (this could be in worship, for example not being able to see words on a screen, or they could be practical barriers like not being able to enter through a door or get to an upstairs meeting room)
9. How are people overcoming these obstacles, or are they not overcoming them?
10. What opportunities can you see?

This audit should happen over a specific time period, to be determined with those in your group, and you should then meet to discuss what the team have observed. Note that everyone should get chance to feedback what they have observed, and others should not interrupt – you may want to ask people to write up their observations and send them to the lead auditor to gather all the information into one place.

Once everyone has had the chance to feedback, you could start to look at where the church is working, and where it is not. Where is the church reaching those it intends to reach? Where is the church creating obstacles to worship or access? Where are the opportunities for change and growth and development?

Identifying these opportunities is the starting point for beginning to think intergenerationally. Start to think about how you can offer something that a 1 year old and a 91 year old can both participate in. Start to think about how you will engage an 80 year old and a 10 year old in conversation. Start to think about how your church can communicate with a 20 year old and a 60 year old simultaneously.

This activity is taken from Cho (2021, pp. 178-179), who found this exercise helpful in her own church.