

Intergenerational appendix



Introduction

'Intergenerational' is a growing way of approaching all areas of church life including ministry and mission. It is more than all-ages being together in the same place, doing the same thing (great though that can be!) It is about fostering interaction between the generations, enabling relationships to blossom that enrich everyone.

Building friendships with people of different ages and at different stages to ourselves helps us see the world and our faith

from some very different perspectives. Sharing experiences, interests, skills and stories helps us build each other up as we grow closer to each other. Being together binds us together. And having fun is one of the easiest places to start this habit!

It is OK to have some time in age/peer groups but all benefit when this is the exception rather than the norm. Expect more chaos and embrace the randomness of who chooses to do what with whom. Expect things to take longer as people have to translate across the generations and negotiate more with each other. The benefit is the relationships being developed and the co-learning and forming of community.

An intergenerational Holiday Club

This could be offered as a 'fun day', a weekly get together (early evening, bring your picnic tea), or a holiday club over a few days.

Principles

The aim is to enable people to build relationships with those of other ages and generations, to share stories and share faith together as equal and valued parts of the body of Christ. An intergenerational holiday club or similar event are the perfect opportunity to break down

'As a church community we must learn to do only those things in separate age groups, which we cannot in all conscience do together

– URC Charter for Children in the Church 1990.

the barriers we so often perceive between the generations and talk, play, explore, discuss, experience, question, respond to each other and to God, and to follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit in our discipleship journey together. Just like a family.

Groups

Any small group activities should mix up the generations. Yes, this can present a challenge, but it also increases co-operation as people of all ages contribute what they are able – maybe one can read the instructions for an activity while another runs to get the equipment needed, maybe one can answer a quiz question from accumulated knowledge while another can quickly look something up on the internet. (And these are not always the people you might expect!) Don't always specify things by age any more than by gender – maybe look for the tallest or shortest, sportiest, most stylish, silliest, wisest member of a group to do a certain task.

Responsibilities

Why not have a 'jobs board'? On a large board, have post-it notes with all the jobs that might need doing during the session eg pouring drinks, moving chairs, reading from the Bible, serving snacks, greeting people, helping with the video etc. If a job needs more than one person, have several post-it notes with the same job on. Then, on arrival, allow people of all ages to pick something they would like to do to contribute to the session. If there are jobs which are traditionally 'adult' jobs, encourage a partnership approach. A child can control the microphones or cut fruit if they have an experienced adult supporting them, in an apprenticeship model, and vice versa if the children know where things go during 'tidy-up-time' and the adults don't!

Activities

People of all ages have different spiritual styles – adults often having one preferred style but a liking for aspects of several others, children more likely to have a preferred style and maybe one other. The four spiritual styles are often described as word, emotion, action and symbol and you can find out more about them here: bit.ly/ROOTS-spiritual-styles. Try to ensure that each session includes opportunity to experience all four of these in some way, maybe allowing opportunity for people to self-select from a number of options the one that appeals to them most. So, for example, having a craft table, an area writing prayers, a discussion group, a social justice challenge etc and allowing people of all ages to choose which appeals to them. Ask each multi-generational group to prepare something linked with the story to share in a time of worship together.

Crafts

Encourage different ages to work together and help each other, sharing skills – not just the adults helping the children, but all engaged in creating together.

Games/songs

Consider the games and songs in the resource and choose those best suited to a wider range of people. If the game is a runaround game, how could you involve those with reduced mobility in that? (Maybe in shouting out instructions to their team-members, for example, or keeping score.) Could all ages share with each other their favourite games and songs and explain how to play them or how to do any actions to the song? Why do they like the ones they chose? This is a good opportunity for older people to share some of the playground games they played and talk about what they have in common.



Prayers

Invite different ages to work together to create and lead prayers, or set up prayer stations and invite people to go with a partner from a different generation to engage with what is there. With the appropriate permissions, why not have a bowl with a piece of paper for each participant on which they have written their name, glued on a photo of them (to aid getting to know one another), and where they've written a little bit about themselves (eg their hobbies, what they like doing, their pets, a bit about their family). Each day get everyone to draw a piece of paper out of the bowl and pray for that person, both during the session and at home. If you're running the holiday club over several days, they could bring their paper back next time and swap it for another.

Volunteer reflections: share these with older participants and invite them to discuss the questions that are relevant to them and to pray for everyone involved in the holiday club. Encourage them to reflect more deeply on the theme and then to find a way to share their thoughts with younger participants.

Sparks and Stories

Story, story, story

What better way of building relationships amongst and across the generations than by sharing stories. Stories we've heard, our favourite stories, whether from the Bible or elsewhere, stories from our own lived experience – storytelling is as old as time itself and Jesus himself shared with us the importance and value of story.

There are a variety of stories in the holiday club materials. Encourage people of all ages to take a lead in presenting them to the rest of the group.

The wondering questions can be approached by any age and the challenge for older or more academically inclined people to verbalise their thoughts in a way that a child can understand can enable them to engage with their thoughts and emotions on a deeper level as they unravel just exactly what they signify. The beauty of wondering questions is that there are no right or wrong answers – all can explore together.



Creative prayers

For those who are less comfortable with creative prayers (and this is sometimes children, while sometimes adults find them a new and expressive way to engage with prayer), you could have a prayer station where there is a passage from the Bible story to meditate on, or where people could write their own prayer in response to the theme.

Day one

Baby bunting can be done by all ages and is a good way of creating something that emphasises all being an equal and important part of God's story.

Day two

For these team games you will want to ensure that teams are fairly well balanced in terms of the height of the people involved. The water game is extra fun with a mix of heights and generations and those who are unable to stand could sit on a chair in the line and have an appointed runner to assist them.

For the t-shirt decorating, this is a good opportunity for people to share skills such as painting, crochet, knitting, embroidery etc. People could decorate t-shirts for people of another generation (if t-shirts are not suitable for some, you can also get plain aprons to decorate.)

Day three

The First Aid kit activity is a good chance to take advantage of the skills of people there. If there is someone who has a first aid qualification or, even better, who is a nurse or first aider or doctor etc, perhaps they could teach the whole group some first aid skills. It can be fun for pairs of different generations to bandage each other up!

The timeline activity is the perfect starting point for building relationships and sharing stories – maybe in pairs create a timeline for each other before joining together to make a timeline for Jesus. Or, having drawn your timelines together, each tell the group one story from their partner's timeline.

Day four

The game 'Save me' may prove a challenge for some, so it will need to be modified. What different thing could players do to save those who are stuck? Maybe draw a cross shape on the palm of their hand or run around them three times. Those with limited mobility could have the job of pointing out the players who are 'stuck' to a team of 'rescuers' perhaps.

The game 'Easter Celebration' is one where being of similar height (not always the same thing as similar age) is important for the game to be fair. Maybe split into two teams with an equal distribution of heights. Then for each round, each team sends in a 'champion'. If team A sends in their tallest, team B should also send in their tallest.

Prayer walk

See previous suggestions for different prayer stations for those who find this activity unhelpful or unpalatable. For those who are immobile but want to take part, they could remain seated and volunteers could bring the different surfaces to them. For those unwilling to take shoes and socks off, have some different textures for them to feel with their hands.

Day five

Invitations – think together about the activities your church does which are age-specific and think about why that might be. Are there any that could be more intergenerational? Are only adults allowed to the Bible Study or the Church Meeting? Is the Eco group limited to children only? Might an adult prefer to come to Junior Church occasionally rather than sit through the sermon? If the activity cannot be opened up generally to all ages, maybe there are occasions when people might be invited to come along. Design an invitation to give to someone else in the group to encourage them to come along to a church activity with you (be aware of safeguarding and ensure that children and vulnerable adults are invited with a member of their family and to a safe environment where other church members who are DBS checked are present and aware).

