

Is This the End of Sunday School and Youth Ministry?

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Debbie Gline Allen,
Christian Education and Youth Ministry Consultant
Massachusetts Conference, UCC
glineallend@macucc.org

Do you wonder if your church's families are getting the most out of the Christian education programming that you offer? Do you have difficulty finding enough Sunday school teachers and youth ministry leaders? Are you concerned that your Confirmation program may not be effective in forming your teens into an adulthood of faith? Is your congregation struggling with the time needed to train volunteers? And are you finding it increasingly difficult to manage with unpredictable attendance? If your congregation is ready to step out in faith to try different models for passing on the faith to the next generation, this webinar will help you to adapt to the cultural, digital, and commitment/priority shifts that your church families are experiencing.

The "Good Old Days"

By the turn of the 20th Century, the culture of the Protestant Church in America had:

- A Protestant ethos and atmosphere
- Little mobility in families
- Public schools that were "Protestant parochial schools"
- Community churches
- Popular religious periodicals
- Faithful tithers
- Blue Laws
- Less digital media

based on material from Westerhoff, John H., *Will Our Children Have Faith?*

*The goals remain the same;
however, the means to the end must change.*

New Old Focuses for 21st Century Congregations

- It's All About Relationship
- The Critical Importance of Intergenerational Ministries
- What Intergenerational Worship Is and Is Not

It's All About Relationship

“To grow up healthy, our youth need to be supported and known by at least five adults in addition to their parents or caregivers who are willing to invest time with them personally and spiritually.”

*Eugene C. Reohlekpertain,
Building Assets, Strengthening Faith:
An Intergenerational Survey for Congregations,
Minneapolis: Search Institute, 2003*

Why Relationships Matter

- Young people who experience strong developmental relationships are more likely to report a wide range of social-emotional strengths and other indicators of well-being and thriving.
- Young people with strong relationships are more resilient in the face of stress and trauma.
- Young people do better when they experience a strong web of relationships with many people.

Relationships First:
Creating Connections That Help Young People Thrive, *Search Institute*
(<http://www.search-institute.org/blog/new-research-report>)

“By the time our adolescents graduate from high school, they will have become so much a part of their entire church family that when they're out on their own they will want to seek out a similar church family to enfold and nurture them (and vice versa) in adulthood.”

“This cannot happen if their youth group experience — even the strongest youth program — operates in isolation from the rest of the church/faith community. Because then, in adulthood, they will seek out the types of relationships they had with their peers rather than the types of relationships they could have formed with all of the ages in the entire congregation, and they will never find a church that ‘feels like’ the youth group they remember.”

Chap Clark, *Sticky Faith*

The Critical Importance of Intergenerational Ministries

- ❖ Thirty years of research: The active presence and engagement of an intentional and consistent adult relationship (parent, grandparent, mentor, minister) is the single greatest influence on a young person's faith.
- ❖ Personal relationships form a heart-connection to the desire to grow in one's faith. (See www.StickyFaith.org)
- ❖ “Faith development does not occur in a vacuum, but rather is cultivated intentionally by a community of faith-filled people.” (Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, lead researchers for the U.S. Congregational Life Survey)

- ❖ Many of today's parents do not feel equipped to model prayer, worship, and biblical understanding for their children. Thus the support and commitment of all ages to follow their congregational baptismal vow — to raise children in the Christian faith — must be present in congregational life.
- ❖ Faith is caught more than it is taught.

INTERGENERATIONAL MINISTRY IS...

- more like a community and less like a class
- more like a process and less like a program
- more like a family and less like multigenerational gatherings (multigenerational = multiple age groups meeting simultaneously)

What Intergenerational Worship Is and Is Not

INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP IS **NOT**...

- a separate worshipping opportunity for the children held at the same time as worship for adults.
- glorified children's church with (silly songs, Goldfish crackers, and the like).
- an hour wasted on the children, especially if worship practices that engage the senses and the arts are promoted.
- something new. Children were brought to worship during the centuries prior to the end of WWII.
- in danger of becoming dumbed down when children are present.
- an opportunity for entertainment because children are present.
- a quiet time for personal meditation; rather worship is a time for the Body of Christ to worship and praise God in a wide variety of ways.
- merely making space for children as an afterthought; worship-planning must use forethought to make it clear that children are welcome and wanted.

INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP **IS**...

- a time for the *entire* Body of Christ to worship together.
- a time for wonder, for both children and adults.
- a time for both children and adults to learn about faith and praising God together through story, ritual, drama, singing, art, praying, giving, sharing, etc.

- children learning about worship and God from the adults around them AND adults learning about worship and God from the children around them (Matthew 18:3).
- an opportunity for children to acquire the “language” of worship in much the same way they learn their native tongue. [Karen-Marie Yust’s dinner table, in resources]
- best learned by children through participation and observation.
- the time for children to acquire the practices and memories that will keep them coming to church for the rest of their lives. [Studies show that 90-95% of the subconscious choices we make as adults are based on what we experience between the ages of 2 and 6]
- an opportunity for children to build relationships with trusted adults other than their parents.
- the feeding of the spiritual hunger of both adults and children.
- welcoming to God and Jesus (“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me...[and] the one who sends me.” Mark 9:37)

“The church does not *have* an education program.
The church *IS* an education program!”

- Maria Harris

A 3-Tiered Process for Introducing Intergenerational Worship

Tier 1: Getting Your Feet Wet

- Assess your current worship structure
- Think about what makes all feel welcome and comfortable in worship
- Consider your worship space
- Provide options
- Make a covenant

Tier 2: Get Ready to Make Intentional Changes

- Consider providing segregated times
- Plan baptisms, communion, and prayers to be interactive
- Make singing hymns and songs a teachable moment
- Evaluate your sermon and preaching style

Tier 3: Worshipping Intergenerationally

- Remember to make it interactive & involve all 5 senses
- Involve everyone, but give them an out

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Guiding Concepts

- Verbal
- Visual
- Visceral
- Sensory-rich
- Unforgettable
- Accessible to all

from Theresa Cho and Marcia McFee

Resources for Passing on the Faith in the 21st Century

Books

- Beckwith, Ivy, *Formational Children's Ministry: Shaping Children Using Story, Ritual, and Relationship*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010
- Jerome Berryman, *Teaching Godly Play: How to Mentor the Spiritual Development of Children*, Denver: Morehouse Education Resources, 2009
- Csinos, David M. & Ivy Beckwith, *Children's Ministry in the Way of Jesus*, Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013
- Creasy Dean, Kenda, ed., *OMG: A Youth Ministry Handbook*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010
- Foster, Charles, R., *From Generation To Generation: The Adaptive Challenge of Mainline Protestant Education in Forming Faith*, Eugene, OR; Cascade Books, 2012
- Kelcourse, Felicity, ed., *Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul*, St. Louis, Chalice Press, 2004
- Miller-McLemore, Bonnie, *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2007
- Powell, Kara E. & Chap Clark, *Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011
- Roehlkepartain, Eugene C., *The Teaching Church: Moving Christian Education to Center Stage*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993
- Westerhoff, John H., *Will Our Children Have Faith?* (Third Revised Edition), Seattle, WA: Morehouse Publishing, 2012
- Yust, Karen Marie, *Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2004

Websites

- Children's Messages: <http://www.buildfaith.org/the-childrens-sermon-5-dos-and-donts/>
- Children's book reviews with connections to scripture: <http://storypath.upsem.edu>
- Family faith resources for daily life: <http://www.vibrantfaithathome.org>
- Home-based faith education: www.faithink.com
- Intergenerational program support: <https://www.genonministries.org>
- Intergenerational worship: <https://theresaecho.com>
<https://www.karenwarejackson.com>
- Resources for celebrating church, family, & secular life milestones: <https://milestonesministry.org>
- Blog on faith formation for churches, children's/youth ministry, & families: <http://www.buildfaith.org>
- Blog on family-focus ministries: <https://refocusministry.org>
- Blog on welcoming children in worship: <http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com>
- Comprehensive Christian education blog: <https://rowsofsharon.com>
- Webinars, resources, & help for all aspects of faith formation: www.prcli.org
- Resources for practicing faith at home: growchristians.org
- Resources for Christian families: familiesatthecenter.com
- Resources for promoting long-term faith: www.stickyfaith.org

YouTube Video for Pondering

There was a YouTube video about 8 years ago put out by the DK Publishing Company. They wanted to counter the perceptions that the publishing industry is dying and demonstrated it in a very clever way. As you watch the video, substitute the Church in your mind as the subject.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Weq_sHxghcg