



GCI CHURCH HACKS

ENGAGING ACROSS GENERATIONS



Psalm 145:4

One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.

In their book **Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community, and Worship, 2nd Edition**, Holly Catterton Allen, Christine Lawton, and Cory L. Seibel explore the power of building intergenerational culture within the life of the congregation.

What difference does culture make? Cross-generational events and activities alone can create meaningful experiences that reflect the kingdom of God. An intergenerational culture forms intentional, rhythmic practices of intergenerational relationships that permeate all aspects of congregational living.

How might we define intergenerational culture? Allen, Lawton, and Seibel describe it:

...intergenerational Christian formation happens when a congregation intentionally brings the generations together in mutual serving, sharing, or learning within the core practices of the church in order to live out being the body of Christ to each other and the greater community.

Truly intergenerational communities welcome children, emerging adults, recovering addicts, single adults, widows, single parents, teens whose parents are not around, the elderly, those in crisis, empty nesters, and struggling parents of young children in a safe but challenging place **to be formed into the image of Christ**.



MOVING BEYOND CROSS-GENERATIONAL EVENTS TO INTERGENERATIONAL CULTURE: WHERE DO WE BEGIN?



1. Embrace transformational change:

Cultivating a culture of intergenerational ministry is likely to require change within the life of the local congregation. For example, we may change the way we think about generations, how we include generations in the ministry of the congregation, or how we disciple across generations. A culture of intergenerational ministry, in comparison to simply intergenerational events or activities, is likely to invite us into a shift that will require change. Consider healthy practices of change management throughout this process. Change does not happen overnight. Meaningful change happens in discernment and community.



2. Appreciate what God is already doing:

While we may be embracing changes in our ways of thinking and practice, it is important to also begin with a posture of appreciation for what we already have. Identify and appreciate where God is already at work through intergenerational relationships.



3. Use team-based leadership:

Creating a culture of intergenerational ministry cannot be done by one leader alone. Utilize the strengths of team-based, pastor-led ministry. Cast a vision for intergenerational ministry. Develop leaders and teams who embody and pursue this vision in ways relevant to their ministry avenues. Develop intergenerational teams.



4. Create new experiences:

Cast a vision and create new experiences that embody this vision. Provide experiences that will allow the congregation to taste and see a moment of intergenerational ministry and become invigorated to pursue a culture of intergenerational ministry. Be intentional about the intergenerational events and activities that you host and how you debrief and follow-up these experiences. View intergenerational events and activities as vehicles towards culture rather than ends in and of themselves.




5. Embrace diversity in unity:

Intergenerational ministry does not require generations to become uniform. Create space for the unique experiences, questions, gifts, skillsets, and more of each generation to come together under Jesus. The richness of the diversity of generations united in Christ is a beautiful reflection of the kingdom of God. Allen, Lawton, and Seibel note:

An intergenerational outlook acknowledges that the gifts every generation brings to the spiritual formation of the other generations strengthens the whole church.

For additional insights into the unique approaches that each generation brings, refer to these two podcasts hosted by the National Association of Evangelicals.

- <https://www.nae.org/choungpodcast/>
- <https://www.nae.org/generational-questions/> 

The Essentials

Intergenerational culture within the life of the local congregation reflects the ways of Jesus' kingdom. Intentional cultivation of intergenerational culture is a participation in kingdom culture, and it invites us beyond simply hosting cross-generational events and activities. It may require us to cast vision, embrace transformational change, lead in new ways, and embrace new rhythms and realities within the life of the congregation.

