

Planning an Intergenerational Event

What is the benefit of an intergenerational event?

What are the biggest faith influences in an adolescent's life? The following quote from Transitions, a CBOQ resource on faith formation in children and youth, emphasizes the importance of community in the faith journey of a young person. "It's clear, both biblically and anecdotally that people need one another. It is part of our social needs. However, this isn't just a community of similarly aged peers. Intergenerational friendships are vital in both the practice and journey of faith. They allow for a broader understanding of how faith is lived and provide a unique support that's different from parental or same-age peer relationships. 'Hemorrhaging Faith' (a 2012 Canadian study about why young people leave the church) found that being in a mentoring relationship was the key driver to establishing and maintaining intergenerational relationships."¹

This is a compelling reason to help children and youth experience community within the church body. They need a place where they are known for who they are. The first step is to provide places where meaningful friendships can develop across generations which can lead to one-on-one mentoring relationships. This development of intergenerational mentoring relationships will take time as well as the input and support of your leadership team and your church community.

In many churches, the programming is done in 'silos' since activities and teaching are delivered according to age groups. For example, there are activities for children up to grade 5, some for youth, and still others for adults. We're looking for something where the church family (people of all ages and from a variety of family units) come together in worship or activity.

Recognize that by hosting an intergenerational event you are creating the building blocks to meaningful and intentional relationships for individuals across all generations.

Are you looking to plan an intergenerational event? Let's get started. Some practical suggestions are listed below. This will be followed by specific examples and templates you can modify and adapt to fit your ministry context .

What is the purpose of YOUR intergenerational event?

It is helpful to put together your own list of reasons why you want an intergenerational event. The way forward will be a lot of work and you may encounter obstacles that discourage you but if you can measure your progress against your goals you will be encouraged and want to keep going. Your church may find these suggested outcomes helpful in your planning.

- Develop community which is inclusive and multigenerational.
- Plan interaction of people from all generations with the purpose of developing relationships across- the-generations.
- Provide an opportunity to interact together around spiritual teaching with a Christ centered theme.
- Enjoy varied contemporary worship.
- Listen to life stories.
- Events will be informal and fun

- There will be a meaningful role for people of all generations

Things to consider when planning activities:

1. Plan a theme and related activities that address real needs or issues in people's lives.
2. How you will address the differing developmental stages represented by the multigenerational group.
3. How long will each activity take? How will it work with the varying ages of participants.?
4. How will you create space for interaction across the generations? Eg: You don't want people to just seek out their own peers. Can you create games and activities where people are paired cross-generationally?
5. Evaluate the amount of mobility required for each activity to include everyone. Eg: there may be different tasks within an activity that allows a young child or someone in a wheelchair to participate as well as an active 10-year-old.
6. Be sure to give the 'right to pass' to everyone.
7. How will you handle very young children who may need a spot to retreat to?
8. Think about providing child friendly food.

Building blocks of an intergenerational program:

1. Gather a team of people who can develop the concept and flesh out the goals.
2. Determine if there are partners or volunteers who will further the progress and vision. How will you recruit them? What, if any, training is needed for them?
3. Once the event is planned, create a team to help you execute this event. It will be helpful if your team has individuals of all ages.
4. Determine location, day of the week, time of day, length of time.
5. Advertising: How will you let possible participants know about it?
6. Determine the types of activities:
 - a. Icebreaker or gathering place which allows people to arrive and be engaged right away.
 - b. Food
 - i. Will you plan a snack or meal?
 - ii. What setup will you have? Long tables, round tables, blankets for picnic or some other arrangement.
 - c. Worship
 - i. Music – think about how the music will engage children, teens and older participants. This will help you choose music from a variety of styles and could include contemporary, traditional, new, or familiar, background music and/or participatory songs.
 - ii. Prayer - be creative allowing people to express short prayers that are non-threatening for those who are not accustomed to praying out loud. For example, you may want to try prayer stations or hot potato prayers (as a person catches a ball or balloon they call out a sentence prayer or praise).
 - iii. Message - storytelling, testimonies, spiritual story books, videos, stories of great people of the faith.
 - iv. Stations with activities
 1. Give choices and invite people of all ages to engage in any of the activities. Potential activities can include crafts, building items, games, cooking, teaching a skill ...the ideas are endless.

Note: Think about designing some activities that are appealing to both men and women as well as those who are younger and older.

Volunteers:

Help your volunteers catch the vision of what you are trying to accomplish.

You will need to include the following volunteer roles:

1. People to develop and execute the program/ activity.
2. Greeters / those who can mingle to make sure everyone feels welcome, can give instructions as needed, can connect people.
3. Volunteers who plan meals and do preparation and clean up.
4. Volunteers who do set up / take down.
5. Speaker or storyteller.
6. Musicians.
7. People with technical skills who can run the audio-visual equipment.

After your event is done!

Evaluate! Did you fulfil your purpose? Was it a good experience for people of each age group? What worked? What needs improvement?

You will find that success breeds success. People will let others know by word of mouth that it is worthwhile to participate and encourage others to attend the next one.

Themes and Ideas: On the following pages, you will find some samples of intergenerational events.

Theme	Prayer
Arrival	Music playing as people arrive; Snack available; greeters at the doors and activity tables
As the group is gathering	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Decorate a name tag: Celebrate the name God has given you, encourage older teens and adults to help young children. Gathering Project: Use straws and marshmallows to build a 'Tower of Babel' (this promotes family & community building)
Welcome, Activities about Theme	<p>Prayer Theme Craft Tables (at each table have a sign that describes the activity, participants may choose one or do several activities.)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Candles</u> (theme: Presence of God) Decorate glass jars which can be used as a candle holder. Supplies: glass jars, tissue, glue mixture, candle, sponge brush, other decorations like stickers, pie plates for the glue. <u>Journals</u> (theme: Focus on God) Prepare journals using small photo albums from dollar store; decorate the cover. <p>Pre-make some prayer labels that can be inserted in the book, provide ribbon, stickers and other décor. Print encouraging bible verses or sayings which can be cut out and used as prayer prompters.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Bookmarks</u> (theme: Study the Word of God) Provide a cardstock bookmark form, hole punch, yarn, glue, decorations, scripture label for people prepare a bookmark with prayer reminders hand printed on them.
Meal	Potato skins, toppings, ham, veggie platter, ice cream bars
Interactive Worship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Video transition</u>: (do YouTube search for a prayer themed video) <u>Music</u>: choose a variety of pieces that will be familiar for various generations <u>Interactive Scripture</u>: help the group memorize the passage. Each table will have one or two words or phrases from the passage which they hold up (everyone from the table standing when their phrase is to be recited) <u>Speaker</u>: Invite someone to share their personal story of learning to pray
Closing / Blessing	<p><u>Prayer time</u>: use 'static electricity prayers'. (photo below)</p> <p>See http://flamecreativekids.blogspot.ca/2015/10/static-electricity-prayers.html?m=1</p> <p>Need balloons, tissue paper, pens or markers.</p> <p>As people leave have them take a tag from the 'take what you need' poster which is prepared and hung by the exit.</p> <p>See http://www.rethinkingyouthministry.com/2012/10/take-what-you-need-prayer-station.html</p>



Photos of making candle holder and of prayer time closing activities

Theme	Camp Mission Trip Theme
Arrival	Music playing as people arrive; Snacks available; Greeters mingle
As the group gathers	<p>1. 'Photo Blessing Card' As participants enter, they are invited to have their photo taken. This is printed immediately and used by the participant to make a card. The participant will attach the photo and write a message to a camper. The card will be taken to one of the camps that the church is leading overseas and locally (supplies: camera, printer, card stock, ink pad, glue, decorations for cards, markers, pens)</p> <p>2. 'Hand-print' Craft Banner (prepared with everyone's handprint and a greeting and sent to with the mission team to the camp participants). Everyone uses an ink pad or paint to take an impression of their hand which is transferred to a large sheet of paper or cloth. Older participants help children do a stamp of their handprint. (Supplies: large sheets of paper, ink pads in various colours, hand wipes)</p>
Welcome, Introduction of Theme	<p>Around the table do activities just like you would at camp!</p> <p><u>Table Game</u> (hand slap game at tables - Sit around a table or on the floor...put your left hand over the right hand of the person beside you. Hit the table and pass the tap around the table...if someone taps twice the direction changes. If someone is too slow, they are out. Youngest starts the rotation. Do it at least 6 rounds.)</p> <p><u>Video:</u> look for one appropriate to camp experience</p> <p><u>Memory verse:</u> Luke 10:27 New International Version (NIV) He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself"</p> <p><u>Some ideas to present verse:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the verse several times, try adding some actions: <u>heart</u>- 2 hands over heart, <u>soul</u> one hand moving in a scoop motion over the chest, <u>strength</u> – flex arms, <u>mind</u> – fingers point to head. 2. Cover these 4 words and see if people can repeat the verse correctly even with words covered. 3. At your table get together with one or two others. Start the verse and say one word at a time back and forth until you get all the way through.)
Meal	<p>Tables are lined up in rows similar to a camp setting.</p> <p>While eating, try this table game – each table group brainstorm what you need to pack to take to camp (supplies: paper & pens)</p> <p>Serve hamburgers, hot dogs, fries, coleslaw and peas. Cookies for dessert</p>
Interactive Worship	<p>Music suggestions: Open the Eyes of my Heart Lord, Go Tell It on the Mountain, He's Got the Whole World, Every Move I Make</p> <p>Faith Stories: Two camp leaders talk about their growth experiences from leading camp</p> <p>Make a sculpture from junk: In a bin collect miscellaneous types of craft materials and junk to work with, give tape, glue, Bristol board to each group and challenge them to make a sculpture on the theme of camp. Mix the groups who are working on the sculpture so that all ages are represented.</p>
Prayer	Use ball to toss around group. Whoever touches the ball prays for the campers and the leaders who are going on the mission trip
Closing Blessing	Close with celebratory worship song and a benediction by leader

Theme	International theme, Christ is for all people
Invitation	Invite people to bring food from around the world and suggest participants wear national costumes, if they wish.
As the group gathers	<p>Mingling Activity: As people arrive, give out a sheet with questions about countries and culture that the participants are likely to know. Pair a young person with an older person to mingle with others to find out the answers such as where others have been, details about other cultures, what kind of food they like, etc.</p> <p>Alternative activity: post flags from around the world, ask participants to see if they can identify where the flag is from, writing the country on a paper posted under the flag.</p>
Decorations	Flags, souvenirs and other items with an international flavour originating from a variety of countries
Welcome, Introduction of Theme	Games about countries Eg: On the wall, post signs that say, Europe, South America, Central America, Africa, Southeast Asia, China, etc. As you call out the continent, have people go to the area that represents their father, their mother's heritage, their country of birth, place they visited etc.
Worship	<p>Video: Use video of some mission work that is an encouragement, showing transformation through Christ; invite a speaker(s) who has served cross culturally and can share the joy of serving and seeing Christ transform lives.</p> <p>Prayer: Offer opportunities to pray for ministries supported by your church or for those suffering in some current crisis that may be in the news.</p> <p>Memorize this passage as a group: Mark 16: 15-16.</p> <p>Music: Include songs with an international flavour, if possible choose a song that is sung in several cultures and have it sung in several languages, one after the other and then all at once.</p>
Meal	Each table can be hosted (and decorated) by a national from one country. Participants bring a dish from their country of origin or heritage.
Activities	<p>1. <u>Post a world map</u>; have everyone mark the countries they have been in with a coloured tack. Gather everyone to come and observe how these markings represent peoples around the world who need God's love</p> <p>2. Prepare in advance - <u>Prayer Passports</u> for each person. (sample - https://www.pinterest.com/pin/148829962661209182/) Use a camera and small portable printer to take photos of each person which they can put in the front of their passport. Prepare scriptures that refer to sharing the good news. These can be pasted in each book. Provide pens and markers for people to write a list of needs that they can pray for over the next week. Include countries that suffer because of war, famine or other disasters. Include countries and people where your church missionaries are in ministry. Include local people who may be friends and colleagues or school mates that have needs.</p>
Closing Blessing and song	Repeat a song that you sang earlier that will 'send' people out with joy

Theme	Forgiveness
As the group gathers	Music playing as people arrive; Snack available; Greeters mingle <u>Cross making</u> – choice of making small wooden or nail crosses; (volunteer to prepare the cross materials in advance) (supplies: nails, wire to wind around to form the cross, pre-cut wooden pieces that can fit together to form a cross, glue) See photo below for understanding the style of the crosses.)
Welcome, Introduction of Theme	<u>Worship songs</u> 1. Awesome God, 2. Every Move I make, 3. It is Well with my soul <u>Introduce memory verse</u> and do a memory game. Have the words of I John 2:12 on a board and gradually erase a word or two, repeating the verse until it is all erased.
Meal	Centre pieces on each table includes a collection of river rocks that are big enough to write on a message of one or two words. these will be used during the interactive worship time. Serve chili with various toppings, cupcakes
Interactive Worship	<u>Worship Activity:</u> After eating but while still at tables, each person takes a rock from the centre piece. Invite participants to write on the rocks – things for which we seek forgiveness. Worship song is played in the background in preparation for writing on the rocks. Invite people to go to the craft tables and get a jar, put their rocks in the bottom then put in coloured sand in designs as they choose; Symbolizes the covering of our sins. (supplies: coloured sand, mason jars) Come back to the tables and add cross that they made earlier in gathering exercise to the top of the sand. The cross reminds us of Jesus sacrifice for our sins. <u>Testimony:</u> prearrange a speaker who can tell the life impact of being forgiven or giving forgiveness. <u>Review of memory verse:</u> (I John 2:12) <u>Prayer time</u> lead by several people of multiple generations who have asked in advance to each prepare a short prayer of thanksgiving.
Closing Blessing and song	Close with celebratory Worship song – Christ is Risen by Matt Maher



Photos of completed forgiveness activity

Theme	In Praise of Talents that God has Given
As the group gathers	Have several games of <u>Jenga</u> on the tables and invite people to play the game in teams, each team member removing one block at a time. As more people arrive, start new teams. Include young and old on each team.
Welcome, Introduction of Theme	Use <u>drama or excerpts of a video</u> about someone who uses their gifts to serve others.
Meal	Macaroni and cheese; veggie plate, ice cream bars or popsicles
Worship	<u>Speaker</u> : Invite a speaker to talk about: When did you discover your gift? How did you develop it? How does it express your faith? How would you encourage others to find and experience their gifts?
Music	<u>Worship songs</u> : Choose music that is familiar and include some which the children and youth will know.
Activities	'Hands' craft: have everyone trace and decorate their handprint. The hand often represents the concept of offering help so this projects follows up on that theme of 'service'. (Supplies include: colourful permanent markers, 'bling' decorations, glitter, foam board or Bristol board or cardstock.) (<i>Consider using foam board so that the backing has substance and the item can be hung up with other pieces of art.</i>) (See samples in photo.) Several people can draw their handprints together on one sheet of foam board or it can be done individually.
Closing Blessing and song	<u>Inclusive prayer</u> : Use a beach ball which as it is bounced and kept in the air, each person who touches it, says a one-line prayer. <u>Song</u> : Finish with a song that is upbeat and sends everyone out with joy.

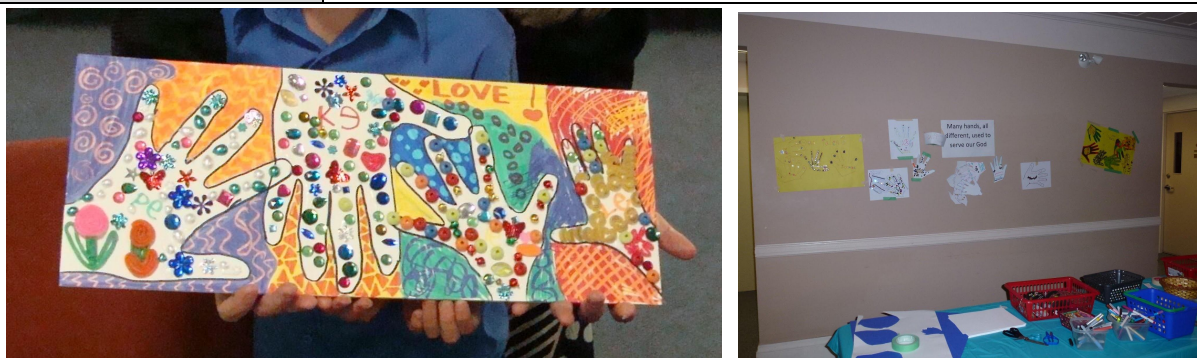


Photo of decorated 'Hands' activity on foam board and on Bristol board

¹ Transitions, Faith formation in children and youth, the big picture and the shifts in between - available from CBOQ Children and Family Ministries and CBOQ