

Ways to Utilize Intergenerational Learning

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1. Develop a faith formation curriculum for the whole community using intergenerational faith formation as the primary learning model.

Many churches across the country have adopted intergenerational faith formation as their primary learning model. The intergenerational curriculum becomes the core faith formation curriculum for the whole Christian community, supplemented by age-specific topics for children, teens, and adults. For example, many churches offer monthly intergenerational learning sessions for the whole faith community. They may offer the same intergenerational program several times each month to accommodate the number of people in the church, using different days and times to make it easy for people to participate.

Churches organize their curriculum in a number of different ways using the rich resources of the Christian tradition, such as:

- the three-year cycle of readings in the Sunday Lectionary
- Bible themes
- Christian practices
- core beliefs and practices of the Christian faith, such as the following schema for the Catholic parishes: liturgical year feasts and seasons, the Creed, sacraments, morality, justice and service, and prayer

2. Extend a topic featured in the faith formation program for children or teens, to the whole community through intergenerational learning.

A topic that the children are studying can be extended to the whole community through intergenerational learning. For example, if the children are studying about Jesus, consider offering an intergenerational program on the identity of Christ. Schedule it within the same timeframe that the children are studying the unit on Jesus.

If the young people are preparing for a service project or mission trip, use the opportunity to conduct an intergenerational session on Christian service, and get everyone engaged in supporting the teenagers. Intergenerational learning provides a common learning experience for the whole community that can support age group learning programs. Examine your age group curriculum and look for the opportunities and topics for extending age group learning to the whole community.

3. Replace a topic in the children or teen program with intergenerational learning on the same theme.

Intergenerational learning can provide a different learning model for teaching the same content that would have been taught to the children. For example, replace the children's sessions on prayer with one or more intergenerational sessions on prayer for all members of the community. Children will benefit greatly by learning together with their parents and the other generations of the Christian community.

4. Add intergenerational learning to sacramental preparation and celebrations.

Sacrament preparation offers a marvelous opportunity to offer intergenerational learning for the whole community and/or the extended family of the one preparing for the sacrament. The celebration of a sacrament, such as baptism or Eucharist, is an opportunity to enrich the faith of the whole community. For example, your church can offer intergenerational learning each year around the celebration of First Communion, focusing on different aspects of the Sunday liturgy within the context of the sacrament. During the Christian initiation formation process (RCIA), intergenerational sessions can be offered on initiation themes, such as the baptism and conversion. In addition, many Catholic parishes conduct intergenerational learning programs to prepare the community for the celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation in Advent or Lent.

5. Conduct intergenerational faith formation before liturgical year feasts.

The church calendar is rich with possibilities for intergenerational learning for the whole community. Conduct intergenerational programs to prepare all generations for major liturgical feasts and seasons, such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, and Pentecost, as well as significant events in the life of your church, such as the anniversary of the founding of the church, stewardship Sunday, or a ministries fair. There are dozens of opportunities for preparing the whole community to participate more intentionally and meaningfully in church events.

6. Add intergenerational learning to a vacation Bible school or summer program.

Many churches sponsor summer programs for children. This is another opportunity to add an intergenerational learning program for the whole community. Take a theme from the summer program and offer an intergenerational program on that same theme for families of the children and the whole community. For example, if the focus of the program is being a friend of Jesus, the church can sponsor an intergenerational program on becoming a disciple or living as a disciple.

7. Conduct intergenerational learning for justice issues and action projects.

Justice issues, events, and action projects provide opportunities to engage the whole community in the work of justice and service, as well as learn about the biblical teachings on justice. For example, prepare the community for a justice and service project, such as helping to feed and clothe the poor in your community, with an intergenerational program on poverty and the needs of the poor. Celebrate the national holiday for Martin Luther King, Jr., by conducting an intergenerational program on racial equality or peace and nonviolence, and then engaging in an action project. Enlist the whole community in supporting the work of national and international organizations by adopting an organizations' project, such as building homes through Habitat for Humanity, and then conducting an intergenerational program on housing and poverty.

8. Sponsor an intergenerational retreat for the whole community.

Many churches conduct a community-wide retreat over several days each year, usually with weekend and evening sessions. This is a great opportunity to enrich the faith of the whole community. Organize your retreat by conducting intergenerational sessions, rather than sessions for individual groups. Develop a theme. Select individual topics for each session of the mission and provide participants with materials to continue the retreat at home.