

Ten Ways

TO STRENGTHEN INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP



Weekly worship gatherings are the family reunions of God's people. We gather as one body to praise God, find rest in God, be reminded of our hope in God, hear our call from God, and leave equipped by God. It is, as Robbie Castleman says, "the only thing we get to do forever."

Howard Vanderwell writes, "Intergenerational worship is worship in which people of every age are understood to be equally important. Each generation has the same significance before the face of God and in the worshipping congregation. . . . Each and all are the church of now" (*The Church of All Ages*, p. 11).

Here are 10 ways to build intergenerational worship practices at your church. Look for more ways to learn, serve, and worship together in our *Intergenerational Church* toolkit at crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits.

1 GATHER A FOCUS GROUP

Avoid the trap of making assumptions about what appeals to or inspires people of different generations. Invite an intergenerational focus group—including older children, teens, and adults at various life stages—to talk about their experiences in worship. What specific things make it easy or difficult for them to worship God fully? Their answers might surprise you!

2 TAKE AN ENLIGHTENING ASSESSMENT

Use our *Intergenerational Worship Questionnaire* to evaluate the state of intergenerational worship at your church. You'll find it in our *Intergenerational Church* toolkit at crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits.

3 WRITE AN INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP COVENANT

Articulate the kind of intergenerational community you want to become. For an example of a worship covenant, see the *Still Waters* blog post "Covenant: Intergenerational Community" (tinyurl.com/WorshipCovenant).

4 CHOOSE YOUR LITURGICAL WORDS CAREFULLY

The words we use can make people of various ages and abilities feel either welcome or excluded. Use an online tool like Readability-Score.com to calculate the reading level of your liturgy and sermons (it's almost always higher than you think). Also check out the article "Inclusive Language Suggestions" at tinyurl.com/lgenLanguage.

5 EVALUATE YOUR WORSHIP SPACE

Spend time looking at your space from a variety of perspectives. Can children see the pastor and worship leaders well? Can elderly people and those with disabilities maneuver wheelchairs and walkers easily from the entrance of the building to the sanctuary? Do you have accommodations available for people with visual or hearing impairments?

6 EXPLORE YOUR CONGREGATIONAL CULTURE

Does every age group feel that they belong in your church? Do parents of young children feel that their kids are welcome even when they're noisy? Do your older members feel valued and needed? For more on the importance of belonging, visit our *Building Blocks of Faith* toolkit at crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits.

7 MAKE THINGS TOGETHER

Regularly provide opportunities for people of all ages to create art for use in the sanctuary. Conversation flows easily when our hands are busy. On Pinterest and other sites you'll find hundreds of ideas that require varying levels of artistic ability and dexterity. Read one church's story at tinyurl.com/IgenWorshipArt.

8 BECOME WORSHIP EDUCATORS

Consider a year-long intergenerational worship planning experiment that will set the stage for permanent changes. Add child-friendly sermon notes and visual cues to your order of worship or projections to help kids understand what is happening and what will come next. During worship, briefly explain the meaning of the sacraments, walk through a song text, or identify and describe a part of the order of worship.

9 APPEAL TO ALL FIVE SENSES

People of all ages learn best when they're using more than one of their senses. Are there interesting and engaging things in your sanctuary for people to see and touch as well as hear? Can you incorporate taste and smell in certain situations? How does the art in your worship space draw people closer to God? Are you using sound and projection in unique and interesting yet reverent ways?

10 SHARE YOUR STORIES

Make time in worship and fellowship for people of all ages to tell stories of how God has been working in their lives. People of all ages learn well through storytelling, and there's no substitute for storytelling when you want to bring generations together. For ideas, visit our *Faith Storytelling* toolkit at crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits.

The Faith Formation Ministries team is available to consult and brainstorm with you on these ideas and more. We'd also love to hear your faith formation stories so that we can share them with others. You'll find our contact information at crcna.org/FaithFormation.



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